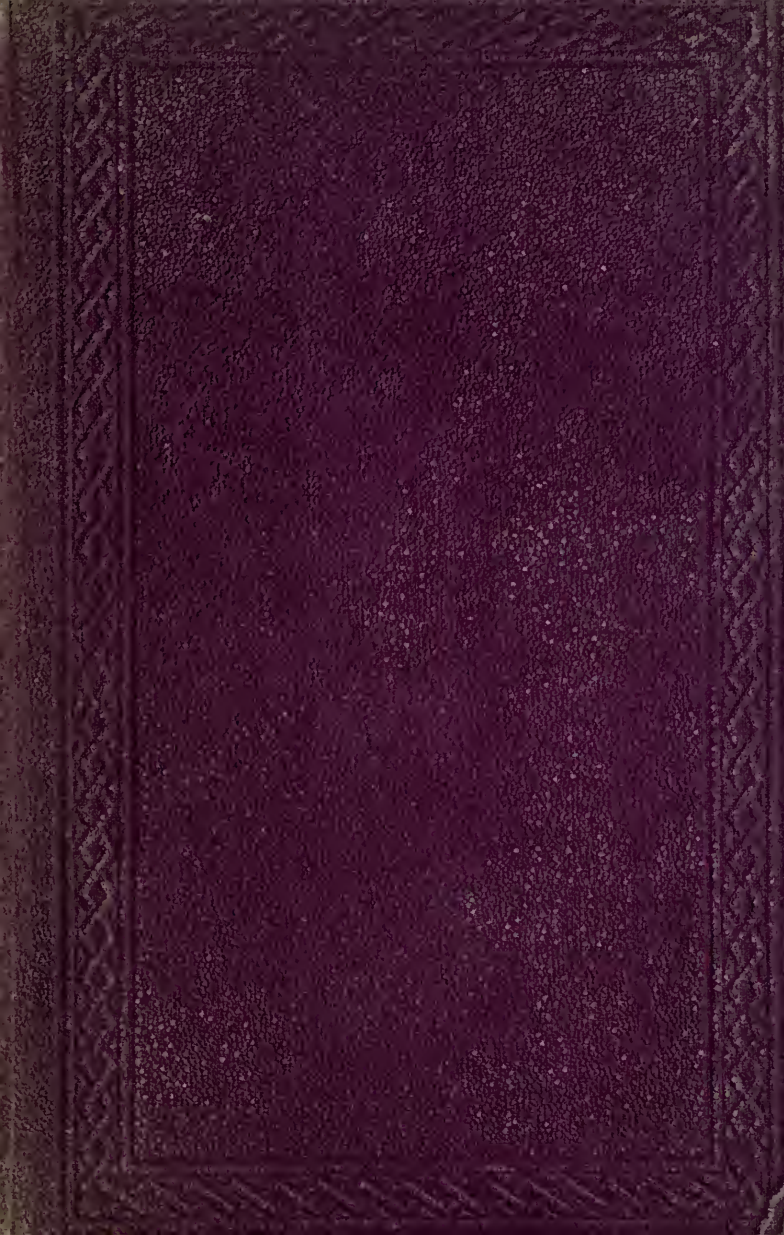






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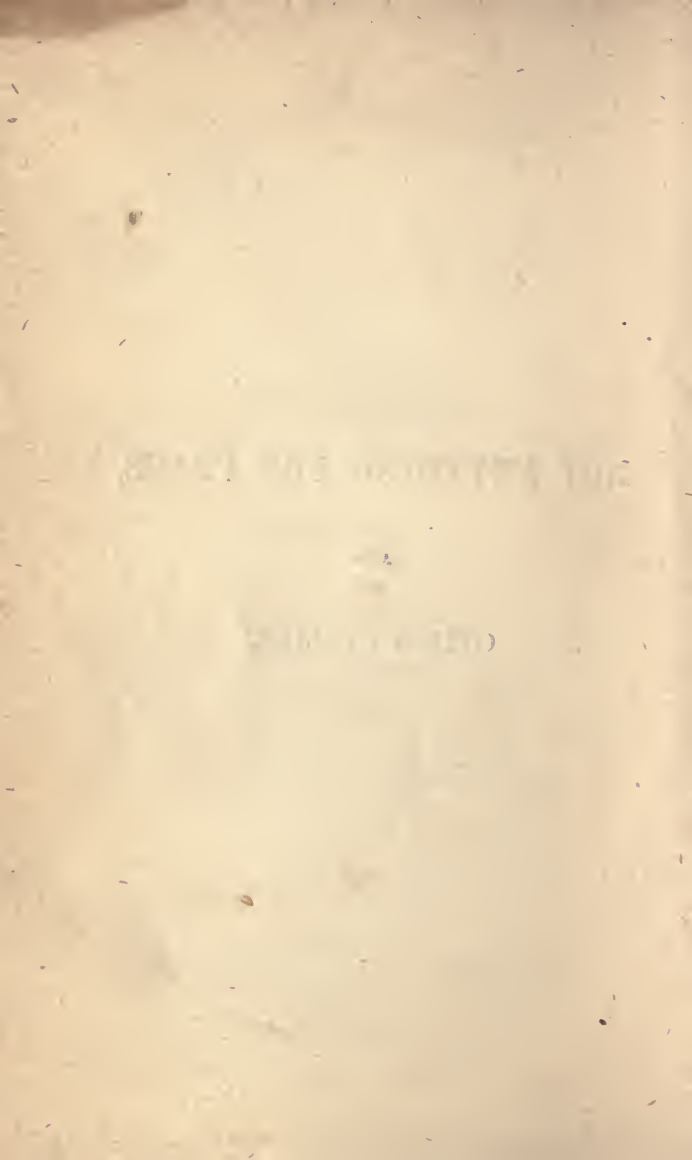
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- I. *HIDDEN WINGS, AND OTHER STORIES.*
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- V. *NOT ANYTHING FOR PEACE, AND OTHER STORIES.*
- VI. *AFTER A SHADOW, AND OTHER STORIES.*

NOT ANYTHING FOR PEACE,

AND

OTHER STORIES.







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STORIES

NEW YORK.
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NOT ANYTHING FOR PEACE,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,
498 & 500 BROADWAY.

1869.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868,

By SHELDON & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

Stereotyped at the Boston Stereotype Foundry,
19 Spring Lane.

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NOT ANYTHING FOR PEACE, AND OTHER STORIES.

I.

NOT ANYTHING FOR PEACE.

Two men, named Archibald Wing and Thomas Ellis, owning property that was divided by a small stream having a good fall, joined equally in the expense of building a dam in order to secure a water power for milling purposes. Wing, who was a Scotchman, and originally a weaver, built a small woollen-factory, while Ellis erected a flouring-mill.

Almost from the outset of this arrangement the parties disagreed. "Wing was a far-sighted, selfish, and unscrupulous person, who looked simply to his own advantage, while Ellis had regard to what was just between man and man.

The site on one bank of the stream was superior to that on the other, the advantage being in favor of the Scotchman. Comprehending this, he offered to sell his neighbor as much ground as would be required for locating his mill a few hundred yards below the point selected for his own. Ellis was about accepting this proposition, when a mutual friend warned him against an arrangement which might lead to trouble.

"Build on your own side," said the friend, "even though some disadvantages are involved. In any disagreement with Wing, don't you see that he will have it in his power to annoy and injure you by stopping the supply of water?"

"He cannot stop my mill without stopping his own," answered Mr. Ellis. "So you see I have a guarantee in that consideration."

"Don't trust to any such guarantee. There are men of so revengeful a spirit that they will not hesitate at wronging even themselves so that injury may fall upon another. I don't charge such a spirit on Mr. Wing; but you know, as

well as I do, that he has some strange peculiarities of character, and is inclined to disagreements with his neighbors. He is self-willed, and much disposed to have things his own way."

"I don't see how trouble can arise between us," replied Ellis. "The water, as it comes from his wheel, will enter my fore-bay. The matter is very simple."

"May I suggest a way in which trouble can arise?"

"O, certainly. Forewarned, forearmed, as the proverb says."

"His works will be lighter than yours."

"Yes."

"And, therefore, require less water."

"Yes."

"The ordinary quantity flowing from his tail-race will not give you sufficient head for more than a single pair of mill-stones."

"I am sure you err in that."

"Will it be amply sufficient for two pairs?" asked the neighbor.

"Perhaps not," was answered.

"What then?"

"He must keep his waste-gate open, of course."

"But will he, friend Ellis?"

"Do you question it?" was asked, in manifest surprise.

"Will it be wise for you to place yourself so much in the power of any man? I say, no; and if you are not fully committed in the plan of building on Wing's side of the falls, take my advice, and build on your own. Draw your supply of water through your own race, direct from the dam, and then you will be independent."

On reflection, Mr. Ellis resolved to heed this advice, and, immediately calling on his neighbor, notified him that he would build on his own ground.

"But you have agreed to buy the site on my ground," answered Wing, manifesting considerable disturbance.

"The bargain was not closed," Ellis replied, speaking firmly. "We talked it over, and I own that, on first considering your proposal,

I favored it. Since turning it over in my mind, however, I have concluded to build on my own side, and take water direct from the dam."

"But, don't you see," urged Mr. Wing, "that in this event we shall, during the summer time, have a short supply of water, and neither of us be able to run over half the time? while, if we use the same water, you receiving it after me, as proposed, the head will be sufficient in the dryest season."

"I don't apprehend trouble from that source," answered Mr. Ellis; "and if I can get water enough for my purposes, you will have more than enough. In any event, the loss will be mine, for your machinery will go whirring like a top under a head of water scarcely sufficient to set a single pair of mill-stones in motion."

Wing soon saw that his neighbor was in earnest, and that it would be of no use to press him further on the subject. So the matter dropped between them, and both joined in constructing the dam. But, all the while it was building, Wing silently pondered the means of securing an advantage over Mr. Ellis. The

fact that the flouring-mill would take more water than he could use in his small establishment, worried his mind whenever the thought was presented. It seemed as if Mr. Ellis were getting an advantage over him, and that was something he never could submit to passively. If there was to be any advantage, in his dealing with other men, it must be on his side.

In a matter so intimately touching the rights of both parties as the joint ownership and respective obligations connected with the mill-dam, it was deemed safest to have a paper drawn up by a skilful lawyer, defining their relative duties and interests. Ellis was not very particular about the form, accepting the general scope of the document in its first draft; but Wing scanned every sentence with care, and weighed the meaning of each important word with suspicious accuracy. A dozen alterations were made before he would consent to sign the paper.

Almost simultaneously with the beginning of work on the dam, were operations commenced by the two men at their respective mill sites;

and these went on vigorously, until the walls of each building began to rise above the well-laid foundations.

About this time, certain movements on the spot which was at first selected by Mr. Ellis, on his neighbor's side of the stream, attracted his attention. Men were engaged in clearing it up, digging, and hauling away cart-loads of earth. A suspicion flashed into the mind of Mr. Ellis; but he pushed it aside as unworthy. Still the digging went on, and, in a day or two, he saw stone begin to arrive. This was conclusive as to the purpose of his neighbor to erect a building of some kind. So Mr. Ellis went over, and asked a few questions in a friendly way, to which he received cold and unsatisfactory replies.

The only thing really learned was, that Mr. Wing had rented the ground to a man living in the next village, a Mr. Adam Wheeler, who was going to put up some kind of works; what, Mr. Wing averred, he neither knew nor cared.

"Is he to have water power?" was the natural inquiry of Mr. Ellis.

To this query he got only the same don't-know and don't-care reply.

"But," said Mr. Ellis, in respectful remonstrance, "it is of concern for me to know whether there are to be two mills to take water from the dam on your side, or only one."

With this, Wing fired up, and became rather abusive, at the same time claiming the right to take at least as much water as his neighbor, which could not be as things stood in their original aspect. Mr. Ellis was a peace-loving man, and retired from this contest, resolved to let things take their course rather than get into a quarrel with his neighbor. "I shall manage to get water enough," he said to himself, and so went on with the work of construction.

But a friend who saw what was in progress across the falls brought the subject back again to the consideration of Mr. Ellis, and enjoined him, by all means, to have the matter definitely settled before advancing a single step farther. Together the contract was examined, and the friend pointed out and dwelt upon a clause, that,

interpreted in the spirit of the whole agreement, would prevent Wing from using water except for the woollen-mill he was engaged in erecting. Other clauses, which Wing had introduced into the agreement, were of rather vague signification, and might be urged, in a lawsuit, against the evident reading of the document. Mr. Ellis saw this, and remarked, in a rather discouraged voice, —

“I’m afraid I’ve been tricked. My neighbor has been too sharp for me.”

“So much the more necessity for stopping where you are,” said the friend. “The dam cannot be completed without your consent, as one side rests on your property.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” answered Ellis. “In this contract, I assented to the erection, and could be held to my agreement. The work cannot be stopped now.”

“It would be stopped, if I were in your place,” returned the friend. “Not another stone or timber should be laid until the question now involved was finally adjusted.”

“I don’t want to get into a quarrel with

Wing; and a quarrel I am sure to have if I cross him now. Let the matter pass, and come out as it will. Anything for peace. I shall get all the water required for my mill, no doubt. Except for two or three months in the year, no short supply need be apprehended."

"There is only one way to peace," said the friend; "and that is the way of mutual rights. If you permit a single aggression from a bad man, you only encourage him to further wrongs. Success, to the evil, is like the taste of blood on a tiger's lips. Make a stand now, while you occupy some vantage ground."

"And get into a lawsuit?"

"Perhaps yea, perhaps nay. But if the lawsuit is to come, accept it on the threshold, and settle the dispute before all you have is invested in these improvements which may be rendered valueless by some unlooked-for move of your neighbor across the falls."

But Mr. Ellis had not sufficient courage to accept the issue. "Anything for peace," he kept saying to himself; "anything for peace;" and went on with his mill and the dam.

No very long time passed before word came to Mr. Ellis that Adam Wheeler, the person to whom Wing had rented the site, was going to put up a grist-mill. This he did not credit at first; for he could not believe so ill a thing of his neighbor. But it was repeated to him again and again, and by such good authority that he felt bound to look carefully into the matter. So he went to the other side for personal investigation. Since the remonstrance at first entered, there had been coldness between him and Mr. Wing, and they had, in mutual repulsion, stood aloof from each other.

On visiting the site to which we have referred, he found Mr. Wheeler on the ground. Questions in regard to the improvements he saw progressing were not needed. His practised eyes read, at a glance, the purpose of everything.

"You are putting up a flouring-mill, I see," was his remark to Wheeler.

"I am," was the steady reply.

Mr. Ellis looked at the man sharply for some moments, and then put the question, —

"Are you not advised that the building of such a mill is in violation of my contract with Mr. Wing?"

"I don't know anything about your arrangements with Mr. Wing," curtly answered Wheeler. "Mine with him are clear enough. I have paid for water privileges, and shall use them. If you have anything to object, lay the case before Wing."

The blood of Mr. Ellis was stirred. He felt angry and combative.

"I'll see about this!" he said to himself, striding away from the place, and going in search of Mr. Wing. He was resolved to take issue at once, and, as his friend had advised him, settle this matter with the Scotchman, even at the expense of a lawsuit.

But it so happened that Wing was absent; and before Ellis reached his own side of the falls, his hot blood lost its ardor, and moved more slowly along his veins.

"Anything for peace," dropping from his lips, as he entered his own premises, told the story of his state of mind.

On the next day, in cooler blood, he met the Scotchman, who put on a repellent countenance.

"I was over to see you, yesterday," said Mr. Ellis.

"Ah! I was not aware of it." Wing's aspect grew more forbidding. He did know of the visit, and of what had passed between his neighbor and Mr. Wheeler.

"I called to ascertain if something I had heard was really true."

"What did you hear?"

"That Wheeler was building a flouring-mill."

"And did you satisfy yourself?" Wing's tone and manner were offensive.

"I did."

"He is building a flouring-mill?"

"Yes, under a right accepted from you; but a right which our contract does not, as you are aware, authorize."

"As *I* am aware?" There was affected surprise, as well as indignation, in the voice of Wing.

"Certainly, as *you* are aware," coolly answered Mr. Ellis. "In the joint building of this

dam, only a single mill on either side was contemplated. Your use of it was to be limited to a woollen-mill, and mine to a flouring-mill."

"Is that set down, in so many words, in the contract?" asked Wing, almost with a sneer.

"If not in so many words, the spirit is there; and your course now is in direct violation of that spirit."

"Go home and read your contract again," said Wing, in a very offensive manner, and turned away, haughtily, from his neighbor.

Ellis did read it again, over and over, half a dozen times, and, at each new reading, saw the stipulations less and less clearly. As first drawn, the contract was a very plain one, expressing the rights of each in a few explicit words; but, under the changes and interpolations suggested by the wily Scotchman, he could not understand it as binding to any specific thing, in fair readable language. After worrying himself over the matter for a day or two, Mr. Ellis, who, in his very soul, detested strife, receded from the resolute position which, under the excitement of natural indignation he had assumed, and, justify-

ing his weak, non-combatant inclinations by the oft-repeated sentiment, "Anything for peace," let the issue pass, and went on with the work of building his mill.

A few weeks more were permitted to elapse without any movement on the part of Mr. Ellis towards a settlement of this serious difference of opinion between him and Mr. Wing, touching their mutual rights and privileges under the contract for building the dam. The original understanding between them was plain enough, and he had considered the written agreement as a simple record of that understanding. To have deviated in anything from its true meaning he would have regarded as seeking a dishonorable advantage. The conduct of his neighbor, therefore, outraged his sense of justice quite as much as it alarmed his fears. It was plain that wrong was intended; but he could not make up his mind to resist the wrong, and so get into a quarrel.

Mr. Ellis was standing by the nearly finished abutment against which the dam and head-gates on his side of the stream were to rest, examining

the work, when the friend who had before warned him against his neighbor on the other side came up, and said, —

“How have you settled that difference with Wing? I see that Wheeler is still going on with the flouring-mill.”

“It isn’t settled at all,” replied Mr. Ellis. “The fact is, Wing and I have not met since we conversed on the subject.”

The friend shook his head, saying, —

“Wrong, all wrong, Mr. Ellis. You’re making trouble for the future. Stop where you are. Don’t lay another stone or another timber until this thing is settled.”

“We have gone too far to stop now,” said Ellis, “particularly so, as a quarrel and lawsuit will be certain to follow; and for both of these I have an instinctive horror. I’ve thought about the matter a great deal, and, in a choice of evils, I think the preference lies on the side I am taking.”

The friend looked upon the ground where they were standing, and, pointing with his finger, said, —

"Do you see that immense burdock?"

"Yes," replied Ellis.

"It was once no larger than this diminutive weed which I pull up with two fingers." The friend stooped, and drew easily from the ground a small plant less than four inches high. "Now," he added, "try with all your strength, and you cannot displace the other. Nay, its strongly embedded roots would resist our united force. Only by pickaxe or spade can it be destroyed. Just so will it be with this unsettled dispute. Take it now, and the wrong may easily be eradicated; but let the wrong go on strengthening and increasing, and you will find it an enemy almost impossible to destroy."

Mr. Ellis looked sober. He saw the force of his friend's illustration. Still he shrank from the issue presented. His soul abhorred strife.

"I would do almost anything for peace," he said, despondingly.

"We cannot always have peace on easy terms. Too often it can be secured only at the price of war; and it is better to accept of war when

our enemy is weak, and we have the best position, than to wait until the situations are reversed. One thing is certain—and the sooner you make up your mind to accept and act upon the necessity the better—you cannot escape a war."

"It is a cruel necessity—a wicked necessity," said Mr. Ellis, much disturbed.

"I grant you that it is. But there being no escape, act with courage and promptness. Be a strong, brave man, intrenching yourself behind a just cause, asking nothing but right, and yielding to no encroachments from wrong."

"What would you advise? What step should I take?" asked Mr. Ellis, in a half-undetermined manner.

"Stop this work at once, and refuse to advance an inch until the spirit of your original contract is observed on the other side. The dam cannot be finished without your consent. Wing and Wheeler may go on with their mills if they please, but if the dam remains incomplete, their works are useless."

"I have already expended two thousand dol-

lars," said Mr. Ellis. "Must that all remain a dead loss? I can't afford it! My future prosperity depends on the completion of this mill."

"Your future prosperity, say rather, depends on the present settlement of this disagreement with Wing," returned the other.

"What great harm can he do me, after all?" urged Mr. Ellis. "Isn't the dispute one about imaginary rights and privileges more than about real ones? I shall get all the water I want from my side of the dam. Suppose Wing and Wheeler do use a larger quantity? What of that, so I get enough?"

"A great deal of that, if it is used in a determined violation of a contract between the parties; for then, a wrong to justice is done, and an evil-doer is encouraged to trespass on his neighbor."

"But suppose I am willing to accept the trespass, in order to avoid a quarrel? What then?"

"Two evils will follow. The wrong-doer, thus encouraged to wrong by the benefit received, — as the robber is encouraged on receipt of plunder, — will not hesitate at additional

wrong in your case, nor fail to regard success as a motive for trespass on others. As a brave, true man, Mr. Ellis, your duty is plain. Security to yourself, and loyalty to justice, demand all the sacrifice of feeling this contest with Wing may require. Let him comprehend, so clearly that he will never fall into the mistake again, that you mean right towards others, and will exact right towards yourself. Suspend all your operations at once, and give him notice in writing that you will neither lay a stone nor strike a hammer until his arrangement with Wheeler, in violation of the original compact, be set aside."

"That he'll never do!" replied Mr. Ellis. "I might as well give up for good and all — abandoning everything."

"A great deal better abandon everything in its present condition, than advance a step, if such is the man you have to deal with," said the friend; "for, rely upon it, he will not let one over whom an advantage is so easily gained pass free from injury in the future. He will prey on you all the while."

"How that is possible, is beyond my ability

to see," was answered; "and I've studied the case pretty thoroughly."

"As you will," returned the friend, whose ardor now began to cool. "But, my word for it, if you don't settle this affair now, you'll only repent it once in your life, and that will be a perpetual repentance."

After this conversation, Mr. Ellis passed a good many days of sober thought. Reason admonished him that his friend was right; but the old cry arose in his spirit, "Anything for peace!" and he shrank from the impending strife. He was the more ready to shrink after a brief interview with the Scotchman, for he found him sternly resolved to advance in the way he was going. An intimation by Mr. Ellis that he might suspend operations entirely on his side of the dam if Wing did not recede from his position was met by such violence of language, and in such a fierce and threatening spirit, that the peace-loving man was really frightened. He saw that in any contention which might arise he would have a desperate and vindictive antagonist — one who would not

scruple at any means of annoyance and injury ; and he was not brave enough to throw down the gauntlet, and enter the arena of battle.

In a conversation which passed between Wing and Wheeler, immediately subsequent to this stormy interview, the Scotchman said, coolly, —

“I know my man. You can frighten him as easily as you can frighten a hare.”

“O, bluff’s the game with men of his kidney !” answered Wheeler, coarsely.

“I said, when he broke that agreement about the mill site, he’d repent of it before long,” remarked Wing, in a tone of evil triumph, “and I’m always as good as my word. He shall repent. When a man once breaks with me, we are two forever ; and if he gets ahead of me after that, why, he’s welcome to all the advantage.”

“But suppose he were to do as he threatens — suspend work on his side of the dam ?” Wheeler looked serious as he asked the question.

Wing shrugged his shoulders, but answered, —

"No fear of that."

"It would block our game," said Wheeler.

"Yes; without the dam our mills would be worthless. But you may set your heart at rest on that score. Ellis will go on with the work. He's terribly afraid of law; and the moment he withdraws his men, I will have him served with a writ to answer for a violation of the contract."

"In case he stands a suit, the chances are all in his favor," remarked Wheeler.

"Perhaps they are; but law is uncertain. Besides, I have a lawyer who knows all the ins and outs, all the quirks and turns of the courtroom; a man who can bully and brag on the outside, as well as work silently and in the dark. I'll trust my case with him, on a good contingent fee."

"And lose it," said Wheeler. "Take my advice, and don't get your case in the hands of a jury; for twelve fair men will say that Ellis is right, and you are wrong."

"Twelve *fair* men might do so; but did you ever hear of twelve clear-headed, honest, fair-

dealing men being on a jury at the same time? Even on a jury trial I might win. Still, I have no idea of letting the case go into court. Should Ellis get balky and unmanageable, I'll submit to an arbitration. If this is kept off until we get our mills well advanced, the vagueness of the contract, and the largeness of the interests involved on our side, will naturally lead the arbitrators to the conclusion that I clearly understood the existence of a right to put up two mills on my property. It will be argued on my side that no possible harm can inure to Ellis by a use of the water, as power, that flows from my wheel."

"And argued on his," returned Wheeler, "that in building a flouring-mill on this side, his business must suffer loss."

"Yes, that ground will undoubtedly be taken, and with a strong show of reason. But I have faith in being able to keep beyond the law's interference. Ellis is a timid, peace-loving man, and I shall give him a threatening or stormy side whenever we meet, just as his mood may happen to require. One thing is certain, I am

not going to back down unless under constraint of law. When I once take a course, nothing but an impassable barrier can stop me. And I have, in this thing, taken my course."

Thus the matter stood on Archibald Wing's side. He knew that he was in the wrong and an aggressor, but meant to hold his position by all available means, fair or foul. For a man like Ellis, he was a hard antagonist; yet this made resistance to wrong, at the very outset, the more imperative. In all such cases, the first conflict of forces is best; for then it almost always happens that right is a nearer match for wrong than at any time afterwards, and able to conquer at the lightest cost.

Steadily, day by day, the works on each side of the stream went on, and the builders, stimulated by Wing, carried on the dam rapidly towards completion. Ellis was troubled with many forebodings of evil. He felt that he was in the hands of two unscrupulous men, who not only had the power, but the will, to do him wrong; and yet he did not possess the courage to accept at once the struggle which was

coming, and conquer a peace ere heavier interests were involved and larger disasters inevitable. "Anything for peace!" was still his cry, when the question of resistance forced itself upon his consideration.

At last the dam was completed, and the mills on both sides ready to go into operation. By this time the feeling of antagonism between Mr. Ellis and the Scotchman had become so strong that they held no intercourse. If they happened to meet, they simply recognized each other with a distant nod. For months Mr. Ellis had refrained from going over to his neighbor's-side of the falls, and knew nothing, by personal inspection, of the interior arrangement and capacity of Wheeler's merchant and grist mill. But kind and officious friends kept him posted. One of these came to him soon after the dam and flumes were completed, and said, —

"I heard something yesterday that I think you should know."

"What is it?" asked Mr. Ellis.

"It came from one of Wing's millwrights."

"Ah! Well, what is it?"

"It must be taken, of course, with some grains of allowance; but I shouldn't at all wonder if it were true. Wing is just the man for such a trick."

"What trick? Speak out plainly!" urged Mr. Ellis.

"He says that Wing's head-gates are at least fourteen inches lower than yours."

"No — no! He wouldn't dare to do such a thing!" said Mr. Ellis, at once excited.

"As to his daring," replied the friend, "he will dare anything to secure an advantage. If it is true, — and you'd better see to it at once, — it will enable him to reduce your head of water in dry seasons just that number of inches, to your injury and his gain."

"I will see to it, and that immediately," was the resolve of Mr. Ellis, who was considerably excited by this grave intimation. But the question as to the means of ascertaining whether the thing alleged were true or not caused a long and unsatisfactory debate. Wing would, of course, meet the accusation with an indignant denial. Only by a survey, skilfully conducted,

was the exact level of the two openings for head-gates to be determined; and as this would involve an open rupture between the high contending parties, the mind of Ellis again fell into doubt, and became embarrassed by hesitation. Seriously did he regret his failure to meet the difficulty at an earlier period, and have it pressed to a settlement when the decision could have been met and accepted with but slight injury on either side. Now, as nearly everything he had in the world was invested in his mill improvement, he was anxious to get to work, and realize some of the advantages for which he had been waiting, spending, and laboring. To enter, at this point, on a quarrel, with its excitements, delays, and unknown consequences, was an alternative which he could not accept. And so, trusting that all would come out right, Mr. Ellis left his neighbor to the enjoyment of any advantage he might hold, and turned his whole attention to his mill.

Ellis's mill contained three pairs of mill-stones. One of these pairs was designed for the grinding of grists; the other for the manufacture of flour,

to be sent to market and sold as merchandise. It was in the calculation of Mr. Ellis to keep two pairs of mill-stones running for about two thirds of the year in the manufacture of flour for sale, and a single pair running for the same purpose during one third of the year, or while the springs were low in summer time. The stones for grinding grist were to be at all times ready for use.

Two things gave Mr. Ellis concern. He feared lest, in consequence of his neighbor's shameless violation of their agreement, he might have a short supply of water during half the year, instead of one third; and he also feared so serious a diversion of business from his grist-grinding department, in favor of Wheeler's mill, as to materially impair the income he had reasonably calculated on receiving.

Mr. Ellis started his mill early in the month of April, some weeks before either Wing or Wheeler were ready. He had plenty of water, and all things worked to a charm. Farmers brought their grain to sell or to be ground for their own use, and the great mill-wheel kept

ever in motion, from dawn until the shadows fell.

By the first of May Wheeler's mill was ready, and then a change was apparent. One morning the water fell sensibly in Ellis's fore-bay or flume, and there followed, in consequence, a diminished power in all of his machinery.

"What does this mean?" was the very natural query of his miller, whose practised ear recognized the feebleness of his wheels; and he went to look at the head of water. Ellis followed him.

"The water has fallen at least nine inches," said the miller, as he glanced down into the fore-bay.

"There must be a leak in the dam," replied Ellis, looking away to where the newly-completed barrier stretched from shore to shore.

"Yonder is the leak!" and the miller pointed lower down the stream. The great water-wheel of the new mill was in motion, glistening in the sunbeams.

The face of Mr. Ellis grew clouded. His heart sank with a feeling of dismay, for he com-

prehended clearly the evil which had befallen him.

"I was afraid of this." He tried to speak calmly, but his voice was disturbed.

"Depend upon it," said the miller, "they have done what the millwright affirmed — set their head-gates lower than ours."

"It must be so." Ellis stood like one half stupefied.

"I am sure of it. See! the water is still falling. I shall have to stop one pair of stones." Only two pairs were running.

And the miller went in to change the gearing, so as to detach a pair of the mill-stones. This being done, the water-wheel regained its usual velocity. For a long time Mr. Ellis stood in deep thought, or walked up and down the floor of his mill, without speaking further to any one; then, calling a lad, he said, —

"Frank, I want you to go over to the other side, and do an errand for me."

The boy was all attention.

"Does Mr. Wheeler know that you are working for me?"

Frank answered in the negative.

"I wish to find out how many pairs of burrs he is now running. Cross over at Jackson's foot-bridge, down the stream, and come up on the other side. Look in at the mill, and see what you can see, then come back and report; but don't open your lips on the subject of your errand to a living soul."

The lad went off with a bound. In half an hour he returned, reporting that Wheeler "had on three pairs of burrs." At this time the head of water was so low on the side of Mr. Ellis that only a single pair could be set in vigorous motion.

"Anything for peace" would not answer now. This issue must be met, and if Wing and Wheeler did not yield to right and justice, war was inevitable. So, by the hand of a messenger, word was sent across the river, giving information as to the effect of starting Wheeler's mill on the head of water, and assuming that Wing had made his opening into the dam at a lower level than Ellis, and in plain violation of the contract. To this an insulting answer was returned, which

aroused all the latent fire in Ellis's bosom. He saw now that nothing was left for him but to accept a heavy loss, or to meet wrong in a stern conflict. For a little while he cast about for a way of peaceful escape, but none offering, he braced himself for a contest, resolved to battle for his rights to the end. Such men, when the inevitable strife is begun, are rarely conquered. The justice of their cause gives confidence, and a sense of outrage nerves them with endurance and vigor. No half-way measures, no patched-up compromises, will suit them. The battle must be fought until right is fully triumphant.

A second messenger was despatched, and warning given, that unless a survey of the dam were at once made, by consent of both parties, so as to get the actual level of the two head-gates, he would apply for an injunction to restrain both Wheeler and Wing from taking any water from the dam until a survey was ordered by the court. To this, answer was returned in these words : —

“Tell Ellis to go ahead; two can play at the game of injunction as well as one.”

Before the lapse of three weeks, injunctions had issued against both parties, and the water about which they were in dispute went foaming over the dam, while the mill-wheels basked idly in the sun. The farmers brought their grain from far and near, but could neither sell it nor get it ground.

The lawyer whom Ellis had engaged made every effort to procure an immediate order for a survey of the dam; but the counsel on the other side interposed difficulties and technical objections in order to make delays. So the mills stood idle week after week, and the angry owners chafed in spirit against each other, meditating punishment or revenge.

After two months' loss of time, and consequent injury to both parties, a survey was ordered. To the astonishment of Mr. Ellis, it was declared in the surveyor's report that the head-gates on each side of the dam were on exactly the same level. The injunctions were, in consequence, dismissed.

An unjust legal decision, operating to a man's serious injury, is very apt to stir any bad blood

that may happen to be in his heart. The sense of outrage is increased by a sense of weakness. While submission to the decree is felt as a stern necessity, the mind casts about for some means of gaining power over the adversary at whose instance the wrong has been suffered. Ellis was in this state, but with no clearly-seen method of reaction upon his neighbor across the falls, when a legal notice was served requiring him to answer for damages sustained by both Wheeler and Wing in consequence of the injunction which he had caused to be served. Hurrying to his lawyer, he laid the summons before that personage.

The lawyer looked serious, remarking, "I was afraid of this."

"He can't get damages!" Alarm was on the countenance of Mr. Ellis.

"You did not sustain the allegation on which the injunction was based."

"It is true, nevertheless!" Mr. Ellis was excited and indignant.

"We do not doubt that. Still the surveyor's report was against us."

"Do you know what I think about that?" said Ellis.

"What do you think about it?"

"The surveyor was feed by Wing. A hundred dollars would buy him, body and soul."

"Be careful when and where you say this," suggested the prudent lawyer.

"I will declare it on the house-top!" asserted Mr. Ellis.

"Don't. It may bring you into trouble with the surveyor."

"How?"

"In a suit for slander."

"That for a slander suit!" and Ellis snapped his thumb and finger sharply.

"One trouble at a time. Let us defend the case with Wing and Wheeler, before we get involved with Justin, the surveyor," said the lawyer.

"But you don't really apprehend danger from this move on the enemy's side?"

"As remarked just now, you did not show cause for an injunction. Security, as you are aware, was required to cover unjust damages to

Wing, should they occur. As the court recognizes no adequate cause for the injunction, having dissolved it, an award of damages will most probably lie against you. I see only one way in which you may be saved."

"What is that?"

"A counter-suit for damages against Wing, as enjoinder in your case, may lead him to abandon the action now instituted."

"Then order the suit at once," said Ellis. "Two can play at this game also."

And it was done. The mills went on grinding and spinning, and the suits went on also, taking more thought than the mills, and wasting as much money as the mills earned.

"Ah, if this had been settled in the beginning," sighed Ellis, almost daily, amid the anxiety that weighed upon his spirits, "what a world of trouble would have been saved! I wanted peace; I would have given anything for peace; and my love of peace has betrayed me into a labyrinth of evil, from which a safe extrication is now impossible."

In the midst of all this, Ellis could run, as the

dry season had commenced, only a single pair of mill-stones, while Wing had water enough for his factory, and Wheeler never kept less than two pairs of stones in motion. The amount of grinding done by Ellis was so small, that the working of his mill had proved a loss, instead of a gain.

At the next term of court, both cases came on, and Ellis lost them both. The decisions were based on the surveyor's report, and awarded five hundred dollars damages to Wing and Wheeler for loss of profit on their two establishments during the period covered by the injunction.

"Take an appeal," said Ellis to his lawyer, when the decision against him was made. "I will fight them to the death. In for a penny, in for a pound. They shall never handle one dollar of my money. I'll spend every farthing I possess in law rather than let it go into their hands."

And an appeal was taken.

The scanty supply of water which Mr. Ellis could get from the dam was only sufficient, through the months of July and August, to

enable him to run a single pair of mill-stones; and so he was compelled to abandon what had been looked to as the most profitable part of the business, merchant-milling, as it was called, or the manufacture of flour for sale in barrels, and limit himself to the grinding of corn, rye, and wheat for the neighboring farmers. It so happened that his mill was better situated for this kind of business than Wheeler's, being on the side of the stream on which ran the public road connecting with the most thickly settled farming portions of the country. The wagon crossing was nearly a mile below, so that Wheeler's mill could not be reached from that side except by a long journey of two miles—equal to four miles going and returning.

It availed little for Wheeler, then, that he sent handbills all through the country, soliciting patronage for his mill, and offering to grind the farmers' grists for a lighter toll than was exacted by his neighbor. The four additional miles, going and coming, that the farmers would have to drive, barred them from accepting his tempting offers; and he had to content himself with the

small custom that naturally fell to his location. He was not content with this, however. Having set out with the "all-for-myself" principle of action, he could not rest in the large advantage already gained, unjustly, over Mr. Ellis, but resolved to leave no means untried for ruining him altogether for the sake of benefiting himself.

An evil purpose stops at the employment of no means that offers a successful result. Wheeler gave himself earnestly to the work of setting aside, by some means, the disadvantage under which he was laboring in consequence of the better location of his neighbor's mill. As he lay pondering the subject one night, the desired suggestion came. He did not sleep much afterwards, but kept awake until nearly morning, looking at the suggestion on all sides, and planning for its safe execution.

Early on the next day Wheeler saddled his horse and rode to a neighboring town. Stopping at a small office, on the window of which a sign bore the name of Paul Justin, he dismounted and entered. A short, stout man, with a sallow

face, and a head covered with a mop of stiff, iron-gray hair, met him within the door. They joined hands, without so much as saying, "Good morning," and each looked at the other with a penetrating inquiry. As two conscious rogues might scan each other, they stood face to face for several moments.

"Well?" said Justin, first breaking silence.

"I want to talk with you." The tone in which Wheeler spoke showed that something of more than common interest was on his mind.

"Sit down. I am at your service." And the surveyor pointed to a chair.

Wheeler sat down.

"Anything in which I can help you?" Justin was now smiling and courteous.

"The thing does not concern me alone. It is one in which you and hundreds of others are interested. For a whole range of three miles, there is only one road and bridge leading across Cypress Creek. The consequence is, that many farmers have to drive a long distance out of their way in getting to a point scarcely half a mile in a direct line."

"And so find it difficult to reach your mill, ha? Is that it?" And Justin looked shrewdly at the miller, who shrugged his shoulders, and replied, —

"Of course, I feel the want of another road and bridge equally with my neighbors."

"You are the first one that I have heard speak of it," remarked Justin, seeming to relapse into himself, and putting on a sober countenance.

"O, dear! bless your soul! I've heard twenty men talking about it during the past week. Somebody must move first in the matter, and I promised several to open the ball."

"At what point is it designed to cross the creek?" asked the surveyor.

"I've discussed that with quite a number, and all seem to agree upon one location."

"Where?"

"About an eighth of a mile below our dam. The hills come down with a gentle grade just at that point, and a road might be cut at a very small expense. The stream is narrow, with close, high banks, and can be easily bridged. All agree upon this."

"Ah, Wheeler! You're a shrewd dog!" said Justin, slapping his visitor on the shoulder. "Can't deceive me. I'm too old a fox. All this simply means grist to your mill."

"That's ungenerous," retorted Wheeler, trying to put on an offended air; but the veil was altogether too transparent, as he was himself conscious.

"It won't do, my boy," said Justin, laughing away down in his throat with an unmusical chuckle. "I understand it all; so you may as well talk out plainly first as last. *You* want the road and bridge?"

"Of course I do. What is good for the public is good for me also."

"Say, rather, that what is good for you is good for the public, and then we shall have it rightly expressed."

"Have it your own way," retorted Wheeler, with a forced laugh, yet with repressed impatience, like one annoyed. "So that we can get the new road opened, we'll not chaffer as to who will receive the largest benefit. Will you move in this thing?"

"Me!" with pretended surprise.

"Yes, you."

"What interest have I in the matter?"

"The common interest of every man in public improvements."

"For private benefit, ha? 'Twill not do, friend Wheeler. So get down from your high position, and stand beside me here, on the ground level. You want this road for your own benefit, and want my assistance in getting a decree from the County Court. Talk it out, and then we shall understand each other."

"Have it so, then. Anything to get the road," said Wheeler.

"What good will I gain? You see we are on a level now. You want the new road and bridge for grist to your mill. All right—haven't a word of objection to urge. Let every man get all the advantage he can in this world. That's my way. Now, I don't care three pins whether the road is opened or not—that is, so far as my interests are concerned. You understand. If, then, I am to move on this track, just show me whither it leads. Where will I come out?"

"Property will rise along the road."

"Not so sure of that; and besides, I don't own a foot of land in the neighborhood of Cypress Creek."

"You can buy in anticipation."

The surveyor shook his head.

"There's a tract of fifty acres, belonging to Tompkins. He wants to sell — told me so yesterday. The road and bridge will add from ten to twenty dollars an acre to its value. Now, if I was dead sure the court would order the road to be opened, I'd take this land, and make a good thing of it."

Justin did not respond in words, but, with a look, invited the miller to go on.

"You might have an interest in the purchase," said Wheeler.

The surveyor shook his head, coldly remarking that he had no money to invest. Wheeler dropped his eyes, and pondered certain things that were in his mind, looking at them from all points of view.

"It won't do," he said, speaking slowly, "for me to stand forward in this matter. That Ellis

would be sure to get up a counter movement, on the plea that I was trying to injure him and benefit myself; and the allegation would look plausible. But if you took the lead, no one would dare charge an interested motive. Now, I'll tell you, at a word, what I am prepared to do."

"Well. Say on."

The two men were seated. Justin leaned back composedly in his chair, resting his elbows on the two arms, and bringing together his open hands, with the wide-spread fingers and thumbs each against its fellow. He was all attention, yet with a well-assumed air of indifference.

"Do you think, if the application were managed rightly, the court would order the improvement?"

"If it were managed rightly, as you intimate, yes."

"To the point; and I am free to say, that if you can't manage it, no one in the county need try. So you have my estimate of your influence, Mr. Justin."

"Thank you for your good opinion," said the surveyor, with a bow.

"I'll make Tompkins an offer for his fifty acres to-morrow."

The surveyor nodded.

"He'll take me up."

"Likely."

"Ten acres shall be yours on the day the road is ordered to be surveyed."

"Your hand to that;" and Justin extended his open palm.

"My hand to that;" and the bargain was ratified.

"You will have to proceed with great caution," said Wheeler. "The moment Ellis gets wind of the movement, there'll be a strong opposition."

"Of course. So far as he is concerned, it will be a matter of life and death. After the new road is opened, I wouldn't give much for his mill property."

A gleam of evil triumph lighted up the miller's face, as he said, —

"The effect on him won't trouble me."

"Ellis is not a bad man," remarked Justin, with a touch of sympathy in his voice.

"No, he is not a devil incarnate; but he's

done his best to injure me, and I'm bound to pay him off with double compound interest. If there is one man alive against whom I owe a deeper grudge than another, it is Tom Ellis."

"You've hurt him already worse than he's hurt you."

"He hasn't hurt me at all to speak of," replied Wheeler, with a self-satisfied air. "I'm all right. Give me the new road and bridge, and I'll not regard him as in the neighborhood. The buzzing of a fly will annoy me more than the clatter of his mill wheels."

"You will certainly hold him at a great disadvantage."

As Justin said this, he turned his head with a quick movement, and listened.

"Is there any one in the back office?" whispered the miller, leaning towards Mr. Justin, with a shade of alarm on his face.

The two men sat very still for several seconds. Then Justin got up quietly, and, stepping to a door that led into a small room, pushed it open.

"There is no one," he said, in a tone of relief.

The two men looked at each other with sobered faces.

"I was certain that I heard a sound in that room," said Wheeler.

"Sounds are often very deceptive," answered the surveyor. "It came from the street, no doubt."

After that the men drew closer together, and talked in a very low tone. Justin accepted the miller's offer of ten acres in the lot of ground to be bought from Tompkins, and promised to set himself to work immediately. And he was as good as his word.

"How is the new road going to affect you?" asked a farmer, who had come to Ellis's mill. This was about three weeks subsequent to the interview between Justin and Wheeler, heretofore mentioned.

"What road?" said the miller, looking curiously at his questioner.

"The new road which is to cross Cypress Creek, just above Harvey Tompkins's."

"What!" The miller's voice cut the air like a whiplash.

"The new road and bridge near Harvey Tompkins's."

"Who said there was to be a new road?" demanded Ellis, a slight paleness visible on his face.

"Is it possible that you haven't heard of it!" said the farmer, in surprise. "I signed the petition several weeks ago, and am almost sure that I saw your name on the paper."

"My name!"

"I couldn't be positive. But such is my impression. I thought it a little curious, seeing that a new road would be more apt to feed your neighbor's mill than yours."

"I've never heard of such a petition, much less signed it," said Mr. Ellis, sitting down, from a sense of weakness, on a meal-bag. He felt that an evil power which had been steadily advancing upon him had made another approach, and that he was growing weaker for resistance instead of stronger.

"Who had the petition when you signed it?" asked the miller, after the first confusion of his thoughts had passed.

"It was in the hands of Paul Justin."

"Had it many signatures?"

"Yes. Most of the people in my neighborhood put down their names. We think the road will be an advantage."

"Has the court made a decree in the case?"

"Yes. It was given on last Monday; and the county commissioners have ordered a survey."

"And I never knew a word of it!" said the miller, now greatly disturbed. "There's some wrong and underhand work in this business."

"I don't know about that. Why should there be? As far as I saw, everything was open and above-board," remarked the farmer, innocently. "It's not an unusual thing to make a new road."

Ellis made no reply to this remark. He felt a stunned sensation. Already the contest between him and his enemies across the dam had left him weak, crippled, and disheartened. He had not only expended a heavy sum in legal fees, and suffered by an award of damages against himself, but found his head of water

so much reduced that only a single pair of mill-stones could be kept steadily in motion, while his neighbors on the other side maintained both factory and flouring-mill in full operation all the while. His only advantage, up to this time, had been the farmers' custom, which his location on the best side of the stream had secured. But a new road and bridge only a few hundred yards below would effectually remove this advantage, and then he would be at the mercy of his opponents.

A feeling of desperation took hold of Mr. Ellis's mind, for he saw only ruin before him. After the farmer had driven away with his bags of meal, he started out to learn all the truth about this new road. He did not have to go very far to obtain the information desired; for, at the point on the creek which had been selected for crossing, he found Justin, with two other men appointed by the county commissioners, engaged in making a survey, and fixing the exact points of location for the bridge. Tompkins was with them, but in no satisfied mood; for, just three weeks before, he had sold to Adam

Wheeler fifty acres of ground, lying along the creek, on both sides, and through this very ground the surveyor had decided to run the new county road. Too late he had discovered his error in selling. The land was worth a thousand dollars more than on the day he passed the title to another.

"Who bought the land?" asked Mr. Ellis, as he and Tompkins drew apart from the men engaged in running lines and taking altitudes and distances.

"Wheeler," was answered.

"My!" Ellis struck his hands together, as he gave this ejaculation, in a surprised tone.

"Somehow or other things don't look right," said Tompkins. "Why should he come to me just when he did, and make an offer for my land?"

"Simply," replied the miller, "because he knew about the project for opening a road. In fact, he's an underhand mover in the whole business. This road is for his benefit. No one else, in my opinion, cares a farthing about it."

"It will be bad for you," said Tompkins.

"It will ruin me," answered the miller, showing strong excitement.

"Can't you stop it?"

"I'm afraid not. It's too late. A decree from the court has been obtained."

"Have you consulted a lawyer?"

"Not yet. It's scarcely an hour since the news reached me."

"Take my advice, and stir this whole matter to the bottom. There's trickery and underhand work somewhere. Nobody asked me to sign a petition. Why not? Nobody asked you to sign a petition. Why not? Men who work in the dark don't usually have the public good in view. Wheeler is at the bottom of this thing, depend on it. He was very fast to have all the papers signed after bargaining for this land. Couldn't wait a single day. I felt, then, that he must be in possession of information touching the real value of the land of which I was in ignorance."

"All of which makes it clear that he is the moving spirit in this business. I must see my

lawyer immediately, and get him to dive down to the bottom of affairs."

The legal adviser of Mr. Ellis had little comfort to give. After hearing all that his client had to say, he declared it as his belief that any attempt to induce the court to alter its decree would be fruitless.

"You can only argue," he said, "an assumed diversion of business from your mill to Wheeler's, and thence injury to yourself. But this will not influence the court. If Wheeler is able to grind cheaper than you, the court will say that here is a reason for, instead of against, the road, as a public benefit. You must adapt yourself to the new circumstances. You must grind as cheaply as Wheeler, and thus retain your business."

"The rates at which he grinds for the farmers won't pay expenses," said Mr. Ellis.

"Then how can he afford to grind at such prices?"

"Don't you know? Haven't I explained it to you over and over again? He keeps two pairs of burrs going all the time on merchant-work, while I have rarely head enough to run more

than a single pair, and must stop that when a grist is to be ground."

"O! Ah! Yes. I see now." And the lawyer shook his head and looked grave; adding, "There can be no question about the truth of your allegation that Wing takes water from the dam at a lower level than you do."

"None at all. The thing is self-evident. And yet Justin, after making a survey by order of the court, declared the levels to be the same. What am I to do?"

The lawyer sat musing for some time.

"We might open the case again. Might try him on a new issue?"

"And have costs and damages to pay as before. There's no justice to be had in the land. Cheats and scoundrels have it all their own way!"

Mr. Ellis was very much excited.

"Law is very uncertain," was coldly answered. "No man is sure of his case until the decision is made. I have argued precisely similar cases, on opposite sides, and gained both ways. Law and justice stood exactly in the same relation;

but the jury gave me the cases. One of them must have been decided unjustly." And the lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Then I am to be ruined totally," said the miller, with much bitterness of manner, "ruined under color of law! Shall I submit? Shall I lie down and let wicked men trample me under their feet? No, sir! I am a peace-loving man; but there is a point beyond which I will not be driven." Ellis was becoming strongly agitated.

"There was a time," said the lawyer, "when, if you had demanded your rights, and stood up boldly in their maintenance, you could have secured them. A time when you had the power to enforce justice. But you permitted these men to intrench themselves in wrong, and secure advantages over you, day by day, until they have become masters of the position. They are too strong for you, Mr. Ellis. Were I in your place, I'd get rid of this mill property at any sacrifice. Neither peace nor prosperity can attend you in its possession."

"And you have no better advice to give?"

The miller spoke in a half-desponding, half-desperate tone of voice.

"None," answered the lawyer.

"I will not take your advice," was the sternly spoken reply. "If the law withholds justice, my own strong arm shall wrest it from those who seek to do me injury."

"Take care, Mr. Ellis," said the other, in a warning voice. "When an individual sets up to right himself against the law, he usually gets the worst of it."

"I shall get nothing worse than what is sure to come if I sit still, and let ruin close around me," replied Ellis. "I've done these men no wrong; but, instead, have submitted to wrong. Not content with gaining large advantages, by crippling my prosperity, they now seek to destroy me altogether. Shall I submit? Never, sir! Never! If the law will not stand by me as a just man in the community, — will not save me from the wrongs inflicted by evil men, — then I must fight my battle alone, and with such weapons as I may chance to possess."

"Again I must warn you," answered the law-

yer. "Nothing but disaster can follow if you seek to redress yourself. As I remarked just now, there was a time when you had the power as well as the right on your side; a time when you could have compelled these men to abide by the spirit of your contract with Wing. But you were afraid of trouble; afraid of giving offence and making enemies; afraid of getting into law; and so let them gain one advantage over you after another, until now you are powerless in their hands. Get rid of this mill property on any terms. That is my advice."

But the miller shook his head in a resolute negative. Though apt to yield under pressure, even when wrong encroached, growing out of a natural love of peace, he had a strong sense of justice and a large reserve of will. He was not quick to put himself in the position of an antagonist; but the position once assumed, no deeply imbedded rock stood firmer. Pride, of which he had a large share, gave iron nerves to the spirit of resistance. From the lawyer's he walked home slowly, his eyes upon the ground, and his mind searching about for a way of safe

deliverance from his peril. Many suggestions were offered; but nearly all of so desperate a character that he could not entertain them for a moment. All the following night he lay awake, pondering the means of self-protection. By morning he had reached a conclusion. He would stop his mill, throw a coffer-dam above his head-gates, and proceed to lower the flume two feet, thus securing the supply of water to which he was fairly entitled. Before acting on this determination he called to see his lawyer. After listening to him, the lawyer shook his head with a decided negative, saying, —

“You can’t do it.”

“Why not? The land is my own. Can’t I dig a ditch in it if I choose?” said Ellis, impatiently. He was fast losing his old self-poise.

“Something more than digging a ditch is involved in your purpose,” replied the lawyer. “Others have legal rights in the water contained in that dam.”

“No legal right to more than a just share.”

“Of course not. But legal rights are determined by judges and juries. Already the

case has been submitted, and the decision made."

"Do you call that decision just?" demanded Ellis, almost fiercely.

"No; I think it unjust. But it was under the law; and for you to act in contravention thereof, is to act at your peril."

"Suppose I sink my flume, what then?"

"You'll not be permitted to do so."

"Who will hinder me?"

"Wing and Wheeler will ask for an injunction to restrain you, and stop the work ere it is a day old. It's no use, Mr. Ellis. You can't drive this matter in your own way. Law rules in our community, and any attempt to work beyond law will operate to your injury. Better, as I suggested yesterday, sell out your mill. These men have you at a disadvantage, and more will be lost than gained in further contention with them."

"If I can't work the mill, nobody else can," said Ellis. "The property, as things now stand, has no actual value."

"I think you exaggerate the disadvantage,"

returned the lawyer. "During at least nine months of the year you will have a full head of water. It is only during the dry summer season that a deficiency can occur. Don't look past this fact."

"I do look past it," said Ellis. "What security have I against such scoundrels? They'll find some means to draw off the head, winter and summer. Honest men have no security. Law is on the side of rogues!"

The lawyer did not answer. Ellis went on:—

"I know that I have the right. And yet, in appealing to the law for protection, I am repulsed and punished. It is not enough that I suffer wrong; in seeking legal redress for that wrong I am spurned as the wrong-doer, and penalties laid on my shoulders. In the very effort to disentangle myself from the thralldom of an unjust aggression upon my rights, the law steps in, and, binding me hand and foot, throws me helpless at the mercy of my assailants. And then I am coolly advised to accept the humiliating alternative of an abandonment of all to the

wicked men who are seeking my destruction. But, I tell you, sir, that while I have power to lift a hand I will not yield. If you were to offer me, this day, the full cost of my mill property, I would not accept the tender. I shall hold it against them. This strife of interest is not of my seeking. I meant all fair and just. But if fight is the word, — if peace cannot be maintained except by giving up all, — then I gird my loins for battle; then I draw the sword and fling away the scabbard.”

“Take a word of advice,” said the lawyer.

“Say on.”

“Beware *how* you fight!”

“*How* I fight?”

“Yes.”

There was a pause. The two men stood looking into each other's faces. Ellis understood the warning.

“Thank you,” he said, “I will take heed.”

It was now as late in the season as October. The summer and fall had been unusually dry, and, in consequence, Mr. Ellis had lost seriously through lack of water to grind, while his neigh-

bor's mill rumbled away under a fair head all the time. But rains having set in, a fair supply for both mills was beginning to come down, and as the water-line commenced rising in Ellis's flume, and his great wheels to take a steadier and faster motion, a calmer and more hopeful state of mind began to exist. There was promise of a good winter's grinding; and, resting on this, Ellis tried to push from his thoughts as much as possible everything connected with the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of his neighbors. But this was no easy work, for, in direct aspect, right over the creek, stood Wheeler's mill, and he could never lift his eyes without seeing the great water-wheel, which always seemed to glance at him with a spiteful and defiant air. Thus bad blood was forever being stirred in his heart.

In the mean time work on the new road and bridge was in rapid progress, and it was a thing of almost daily occurrence for the farmers who came with their grists to refer to the period of its completion.

"You'll not have it all your own way long,

friend Ellis," one would say, as he tried to beat down the miller's price for grinding. "The new bridge will be ready at Christmas."

"Your neighbor opposite intends to run you off the track," another would remark; while from a third would come the annoying asseveration, that in a week after the new road and bridge were completed he wouldn't have a grist in his mill.

These things were deeply galling. Ellis pondered them night and day, a spirit of angry desperation gaining a stronger and stronger ascendancy over him. Those who had known him intimately for years, were surprised to mark the change that had come over him. He was harder and more irritable. All his cheerfulness of temper was gone. It had given place to a stern reserve, that repelled almost every one. Half of his time he seemed lost amid gloomy thoughts.

At last the bridge was completed, and, according to prediction, the farmers' wagons, instead of stopping at Ellis's mill, commenced crossing by the new road. To check this, the price of

grinding was reduced to Wheeler's schedule, which operated as a temporary diversion of trade back to the old channel. But Wheeler was not the man to yield in this contest, which he had resolved not to abandon until Ellis was wholly ruined. So he dropped to a lower scale, and the farmers again took their way across the new bridge. A few days afterwards a handbill was circulated extensively on both sides of the creek, in which Ellis used some pretty strong language against both Wing and Wheeler, and closed by declaring that he would grind for any prices the farmers might choose to pay. Two things followed by way of retaliation — a libel suit, and an offer to grind without any charge whatever. So the wall of fate seemed to rise higher and close in nearer and nearer upon Ellis every day. Every arrow directed against his neighbors across the creek hurt himself; every blow aimed at them stunned him in its recoil. He grew blinder and more desperate.

About this time the appeal case was to be argued in court. For several days before it was reached on the docket Mr. Ellis was in a state

of such nervous excitement that he could hardly eat or sleep.

"I shall lose it, of course," he said. "Everything is going against me."

And his prediction was verified. The decision of the lower court was affirmed. The five hundred dollars damages, with additional costs, had to be paid. Unhappy man! All things seemed conspiring to his ruin.

The offer made by Wheeler to grind for nothing, kept his grist-mill in full operation all the while, and left that of Ellis nearly idle. There were a few, of more just and manly character, who were not to be influenced in the mean and sordid way that distinguished the many, and these came to Ellis. But their number was too small to be of much good service. To some of these Ellis talked freely, giving his own side of the case, and exhibiting his wrongs. He denounced the law, as made for the benefit of scoundrels; and darkly hinted his purpose of taking the law into his own hands. Some advised prudence, while others led him on to talk as freely as he list, and encouraged a spirit of retaliation.

"There'd be a fire in this neighborhood," said one of these less considerate friends, "were I the owner of your mill. I don't say where; but I'm sure of one thing—it wouldn't be in my premises." And he looked meaningly at Ellis. This man's name was Porterfield.

"Where would it be?" inquired the miller, who very well understood what was in his neighbor's mind.

"I don't say. But one thing is certain—no man should drive me to ruin. If the law failed to protect me, I'd protect myself. I had a neighbor once who was the owner of a troublesome steer. The animal had a trick of opening gates and taking down bars. There was no security against its depredations. One day my cornfield suffered pretty badly. I sent the owner a bill of damages, and he refused to pay it, giving me some impudence. When I go in, I'm bound not to come out second best. So I gave the bill to a magistrate, and told him to sue. Well, as luck would have it, I lost the case through some defect of proof, and had costs to pay. I was angry, and no mistake. But, as

I had gone in, I wasn't coming out so — not I. I swore revenge against the old steer; and that was bad for the steer. One day his owner found him with a broken leg, and had to shoot him. I think he understood the case; but I had taken care that no evidence should lie at my door."

Ellis cast his eyes upon the ground, in a thoughtful way, and stood for some time without making any answer. The neighbor eyed him closely, and with something of a sinister expression.

"Good day," he said, as he jumped into his wagon.

Ellis started, and a slight flush came into his face, as he looked up at the farmer.

"Don't be driven to the wall. Self-preservation is the first law of nature," said the latter, as he took up the reins, and gave them a jerk. "I know very well what I'd do, if I were in your place."

"What?" asked Ellis.

The man glanced across the stream in a peculiar manner, not to be misunderstood, and then, speaking to his horse, drove away.

The next man who came to the mill found Ellis so deeply immersed in thought that his approach was unheeded.

"Asleep?" said he, touching the miller with the end of his whip.

Ellis started up like one affrighted, his face crimsoning, his air confused. His appearance, for a moment or two, was that of a person trying hurriedly to conceal something.

"Only day-dreaming," he answered, affecting an indifference that caused the other to wonder at the contrast of calmness in the tone with a strange excitement of look and manner.

"Rather a hard customer to deal with over there," remarked the man, as he sat waiting for his corn to be ground; and he tossed his head in the direction of Wheeler's mill.

"Rather," was coldly responded.

"I never liked him," said the man, who was inclined to draw out the miller.

Ellis did not answer. His mind was too much oppressed by many thoughts to be at all inclined, just then, to conversation.

"Nobody likes him." The man was more emphatic.

"Why, then, does nearly everybody go to his mill?" asked Mr. Ellis.

"O, as to that, if something can be had for nothing, nearly everybody is willing to accept the accommodation."

"Which doesn't say much for nearly everybody's sense of justice and independence."

"Of course not. But you can buy one half of the people around here for a dollar—their self-respect, I mean. As for Adam Wheeler, he can't grind for me at any price, while there's another mill within a distance of ten miles."

This drew Ellis a little out of himself, and he replied, with considerable warmth, —

"*His* mill wouldn't stand where it does for twenty-four hours if justice were done."

"That's a fact," replied the other. "I understand the case thoroughly. A more shameless violation of an individual's rights has not occurred in this community. Why don't you come down on him with a strong hand, and wrest by force the justice denied by law? I would do it."

"It's easy enough to talk," said Ellis, fretfully.

"Only a little easier than acting," answered the man.

Ellis looked at his customer steadily for some time, trying to read his face; but he could make out nothing satisfactory.

"One thing is certain," went on the other; "I would never stand it to see that mill-wheel flaunting itself in the sunshine, day after day. It should stop, and at any cost."

"How would you stop it?"

"I'd find a way."

"Show me the way."

"Can't; you must find it out for yourself." And the man, who was standing in the door, looking across the creek, turned back into the mill, and sat down on a bag of meal, lightly humming a tune.

"I've tried law to my sorrow," said Ellis.

"Law!" The man snapped his fingers in contempt. "Honest men usually come out second best in law."

"What other safe recourse is left?"

"One thing is very plain," was answered; "if you sit still, and let your enemy gain one or

two more trifling advantages, it is all over with you."

"I know that as well as you."

"And you're going to sit still?"

"I?" Two red spots came out on the cheeks of Mr. Ellis; and there was a flashing light in his eyes.

"So I understand you."

"Don't!"

"Ah! Then you are not going to sit still?"

"Perhaps not — unless my hands and feet are tied."

"That's talking like a man. When you have justice on your side, fight to the bitter end."

"What I intend doing."

"Desperate diseases require desperate remedies; and this case is a desperate one."

"That's so!" replied Ellis, with knit brows and a clinched hand, that was shaken menacingly towards his neighbor's mill. "There are reserved forces with every man, and he is a coward who fails to use them in extremity."

"And elements quite as potent as law," said the tempter.

"Exactly."

"I thought it was in you. Now, do you know that Wheeler and Wing think you a coward — a man who will go down rather than fight in mortal desperation?"

"How do you know this?" demanded Ellis, in a fiery manner. The remark had stung him.

"Some things are said and some things are heard. Men talk out as they think, when they feel safe in regard to listeners. Wheeler talks now and then, and so does Wing. I've heard them."

"What do they say?"

"I don't know what they say now; but I have heard them talking in my time."

"About me?"

"Yes."

"And they intend driving me to the wall, I suppose?"

"They do; and not only driving you to the wall, but pinning you there. Now you understand just what you have to expect from them, and must govern yourself accordingly. It has

come to be a case of life and death, friend Ellis; and you'll have to look it steadily in the face. They are bound to destroy you, root and branch. Strike first, and destroy them, — that's my advice."

"Strike first," said Ellis to himself, when alone. "Where shall I strike? How shall I strike?"

He sat down in a dull, abstracted way, but did not long remain so. In a few minutes he rose up hurriedly, and, as if by a forced effort, gave himself to the work around him — now examining the flour as it came from a pair of mill-stones, to see if the grinding was right, and slightly altering the pressure; now looking down into the cog-pit, and listening to the jar and rattle of the great iron wheels; now passing to the upper floors, and examining the grain-garner; and now, guided by the creaking of a dry journal, giving to the heated machinery a needed supply of oil. In this way Mr. Ellis occupied himself for more than half an hour. Then, leaning from one of the upper windows that looked across the creek, he fixed his eyes

upon Wheeler's mill. There had been a partial lifting of the clouds from his countenance while he moved about and gave thought to the common duties that lay around him; but now the shadows fell over it again. Nearer than the tempting neighbor had stood to him, a little while before, stood a subtle enemy, whispering of revenge, assault, and destruction. Questioned the fiend, tauntingly, —

“Are you going down without a last fierce struggle?”

“No!” ejaculated the miller, clinching his hands. “By all that I hold dear and sacred, no! I will not be swept down and leave him secure and triumphant. For the sake of peace and neighborly good-will I gave way in the beginning, when right admonished me to stand firm. I put weapons into the hands of mine enemy, and now he pursues me to utter destruction. Shall I not, being at bay, fight with mad desperation? Shall I not destroy this enemy to save myself?”

“If you are a man!” whispered the fiend.

Then a vision passed, for an instant, before the

eyes of Ellis. Suddenly flames broke out, and leaping upwards and around the mill opposite, held it in a fiery pall.

The miller caught his breath as the vision passed, and turned from the window with a pale, startled face.

"It must come to that." The fiend was still at his ear. "It must come to that. There is no other way of safety. If he stands, you fall. One of these mills must go down. Shall it be yours?"

"It shall not be mine!" answered the miller to himself, sternly.

In the evening, when Mr. Ellis came home, his wife noticed a change in his appearance.

"Are you sick, Thomas?" she asked, with some anxiety in her voice.

He turned his face aside, as he answered, with what seemed to her embarrassment and evasion, "No; I'm very well:" and passing her with unusual quickness, went to one of the chambers, and remained there until called to supper; then he came down and took his place at the table.

"You're not eating anything, Thomas," said his wife, after a little while. Ellis, who had fallen into an absent state, rallied himself, with a slight confusion of manner, and lifting his yet untasted cup of tea, drank it off at a single draught.

"I don't feel much appetite," he answered; and pushing his chair back from the table, got up and went away to a shaded part of the room, where he sat with his face in more concealment.

"Does anything trouble you, Thomas?" asked Mrs. Ellis, coming to his side a little while afterwards, and laying her hand upon him.

"Yes, something always troubles me," he answered, gloomily. "Can I smile and be at peace, when I see a gulf opening at my feet?"

"Don't talk so, husband; it distresses me," said Mrs. Ellis. "All will come out right in the end, if you continue to do right."

"It's coming out right very fast, isn't it, now?" he answered, in a tone of irony. "Coming out right very fast! What is my mill property worth to-day? Nothing — just nothing at all! Have I done wrong to any one? Have I not

been just in dealing? If I continue to do right! No, no; that assurance goes for nothing. Rogues have it all their own way nowadays; honest men are at a discount."

"That I should live to hear you say so, Thomas!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis, tears falling over her cheeks.

"That I should live to say so!" was answered, gloomily.

"Something has happened to make you despond; but you'll see more clearly in the morning." Mrs. Ellis tried to speak cheerfully.

"In the morning!" He turned his head with a quick motion, and looked for an instant intently at his wife.

"Sleep calms the mind, Thomas. We lie down at night with troubled hearts, and when the morning breaks, all is again peaceful. Still trust in God, and have faith in the right. The wicked may flourish for a season; but, like flowers with a worm at the root, they wither often in a day. Though all looks dark around you, dear husband, the sun *will* come forth again."

"I cannot hope against hope," replied Mr. Ellis, with an air of impatience. "Every struggle that I have made, in the effort to disentangle myself from the toils of my enemies, has only given them a new power over me. But" — and his manner changed — "one thing is certain; I am not going down without a last struggle. They shall not destroy me wholly, and yet dwell in safety."

He set his teeth, and clinched his hands, in a way that caused a low, creeping chill to pass along the nerves of his wife. She tried to remonstrate, but he waved his hand with increasing impatience, and said, —

"Don't talk to me, Margaret! I can't bear it just now."

Mrs. Ellis moved away from her husband, a sad look falling over her patient face. Rising, the unhappy man went from the house. It was a clear, starlit night. Across the creek, that flowed a little way from his dwelling, the flouring and woollen mills of Wheeler and Wing loomed faintly out from the surrounding darkness. Mr. Ellis stood still, gazing at them for a long time;

then he passed down to the side of the stream, by a road leading towards his own mill, and getting close to the water, bent forward, and examined certain rocks and large stones that lay in the creek. Apparently not satisfied, he moved farther down, and once more strained his eyes into the murky air. To all appearance, his design was to cross over to the other side; for he now stepped carefully from the shore upon the broad rock that stretched for several yards into the shallow stream, and after getting to the end of this, jumped across to another and smaller rock. Beyond this, at short but irregular distances, and ranging up the stream, were a number of projecting stones and points of nearly submerged rocks, around which the water rushed and foamed noisily. From one to another of these Ellis passed, slipping now and then, but maintaining his erect position until he gained the other side. Here, with his heart beating in great audible throbs, he stood still, and for nearly five minutes scarcely stirred from the spot. All was silent, save the rain-like seething of the dam, over which a thin veil of water was falling.

Why was he there, and at that hour? What was passing in his thoughts? Never in his life before had he been there at that hour, and alone. Miserable man! How was the tempter gaining over him!

Suddenly starting, he listened with strained ear, and eyes searching into the surrounding night. Something was moving not far off. He saw a form but half defined, and heard the dropping of feet among the grass and leaves, but could not make out whether it was that of a man or an animal. Whoever or whatever it was, the form soon lost itself in the darkness, and the sound which had startled him was no longer heard.

A nervous trembling now seized upon Mr. Ellis. His limbs shook, his knees bent under the weight of his body, his teeth rattled. Slowly and cautiously he commenced the difficult task of recrossing the stream. When near the centre, his foot slipped from the side of a slimy stone, and one leg was buried knee-deep in the water. Recovering himself, he made the rest of his way across without further mishap, and when

safely on his own side, sat down upon a stone, weak and panting. As soon as he had regained a degree of calmness, Mr. Ellis arose and returned to his house. Avoiding his wife, he went up stairs, and removing his wet shoe and stocking, concealed them in a dark closet. Then taking a pair of dry stockings, and another pair of shoes, he laid them with his clothing, which he removed, and went to bed.

An hour afterwards, when Mrs. Ellis came up, she spoke to her husband, but he did not answer. Holding a candle near his face, she looked at him with eyes full of tenderness and pity, murmuring to herself as she did so, "I'm glad he's sleeping."

But did he sleep? Two hours later he stood over her, candle in hand. But the light did not send a beam through the closely-shut eyelids. Silently withdrawing, Mr. Ellis, who was only partially dressed, shut the chamber door, and in the next room fully attired himself. Then putting out the light, he felt his way down stairs, and left the house. The same road taken earlier in the night was taken now, and in a few

minutes he stood by the starlit stream, that gurgled, and seethed, and murmured through its rocky obstructions. There was no hesitation of manner now. With bold strides the miller dashed across from rock to rock, and in a few excited moments stood upon the opposite shore. The point was several hundred yards below Wheeler's mill, the outline of which cut sharply against the moonless sky. Picking his way along the shore, Ellis approached the mill, moving with increasing caution as he drew near. He was not over a hundred feet distant, when a light, as if a great meteor had suddenly streamed across the sky, lifted the whole landscape out of darkness, making even the smallest objects visible. Turning his eyes upon the mill, near which he stood, he saw a volume of flame that filled the whole of an upper window pouring out like a devouring flood. Surprise and fear paralyzed him. He stood immovable for several moments, the light growing stronger and stronger all the while, as the flame spread, reaching to other windows, and leaping forth into the air, until, within a wide circle, it was luminous as day.

An instinct of danger caused Mr. Ellis to glance hurriedly around him, here and there, for a place of concealment. He dared not venture to recross the stream, lest some neighbor, aroused by the conflagration, should discover him in the passage. To be found away from home at midnight, and in such near proximity to the burning mill, would surely lead to his arrest as an incendiary. He shuddered at his peril, while great beads of cold perspiration stood upon his face. Intense the light grew, the rays seeming to draw around him as a focal centre.

"Fire! Fire!" The cry broke wildly out of the deep silence. Ellis turned, and saw a man springing down the bank on the opposite side of the creek, and dashing into the water. To run for a clump of trees that stood a few hundred feet from the stream was to act from a natural perception of danger. Gaining the sheltering point, and crouching among the underbrush, he looked out fearfully upon the scene. "Fire! Fire!" The wild cry, given at short intervals, kept thrilling the air. Soon it was repeated,

first singly and remotely, but soon in multiplied responses, and in the nearer mingling of excited voices.

“Fire! Fire!” It was just behind him. Mr. Ellis crouched lower to the earth, actually creeping under the closely-matted leaves and branches of a large hawthorn. The man who had uttered the cry passed within a few feet of where he was lying, and encountered, a little way beyond, another man, who asked, in an excited voice, —

“Did you see a person running?”

“No!” was answered.

“He went in just there. I saw him as I came down on the other side. He was out in the glare of the light, and ran off at my cry of ‘Fire.’ What was he doing there? Why did he not give the alarm? Why did he run?”

At this instant, a cry that made all hearts shudder rang out from the mill, and a man appeared at an upper story, stretching forth his hands for succor. It was Wheeler. Below him the story was on fire, and the flames beginning to crash through the windows, from which dense

volumes of smoke belched forth. The men who had paused near to where Ellis lay concealed now dashed off towards the mill. Creeping forth from his hiding-place, Ellis retreated farther away, until he reached the skirt of a dense wood, into which he retired hastily, running until at so great a distance from the burning mill that he was in no danger of discovery. Here he found opportunity to rally his bewildered faculties, and to let reason take the place of blind fear.

A little clear thinking soon made it plain to Mr. Ellis that the only way to avoid suspicion was to hasten to the scene of conflagration, and join in with his neighbors in their effort to save life and property. But was there not danger in approaching the fire from the side opposite that on which he lived? Might not the man who saw him fleeing for concealment recognize him? But how was it possible to gain his own side of the creek without being discovered? As Mr. Ellis debated, time passed, every moment increasing his perplexity. The roar of the conflagration, and the confused mingling of many voices,

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grew louder and louder. To hesitate long was fatal.

Desperately breaking forth from the woods, Ellis at length dashed forward in the direction of the mill, determined to reach it by the shortest way. As he sprang over a fence that separated a field from the common road, he came upon a man who was running at full speed towards the fire.

"Why, Ellis!" exclaimed the man. "What are you doing here?"

"O, Porterfield! Is this you?" responded the miller, in a voice that betrayed his agitation. "I crossed by the bridge, and took a short cut through the woods."

"A short cut! I should call it a long cut," answered the man, as they ran forward, side by side.

"It proved a long cut," answered Ellis, driven to find some plausible explanation, "for I got bewildered and turned out of the way. This is a bad business."

"What?"

"This fire."

"Do you think so?" There was a meaning in Porterfield's voice that did not fall pleasantly on the miller's ears.

"Of course I do. Fire is always a great disaster."

"It will hardly prove a disaster to you in the present case, I'm thinking," said Porterfield. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good."

By this time they came into the open space that surrounded the mill. A large number of persons had already reached the scene of conflagration, and hundreds more were flocking thitherward from all directions. But fire was absolute monarch for that night. The pale crowd that stood helplessly gazing up at the madly leaping and quivering flames, had no power to stay their progress; and when the roof went crushing in upon the consuming floors, an answering groan of pain and horror fell upon the air, for beneath that falling roof was the body of Adam Wheeler!

For nearly two hours the mill burned; and then the fierce flames went down, dying amid

heaps of red coals, that lay between the walls like furnace fires.

As Mr. Ellis stood among the crowds of people drawn to the scene of destruction, half stupefied and bewildered, his ears took in many sentences that made his heart sink and tremble. Two men talked thus, not knowing that he was near them.

"There's been foul work here, I'm afraid," said one of them.

"Why do you think so?" was inquired.

"I have my suspicions," vaguely replied the first speaker.

"Whom do you suspect?"

"There have been two or three lawsuits about this mill property."

"With Ellis?"

"I didn't mention any names."

"You might as well have done so," said the man with whom he was conversing.

"Other people may call names. I never do," was answered.

"But you really think the mill was set on fire?"

"I can tell you what I saw."

"What?"

"I was the first man who cried 'Fire!'"

"Were you?"

"Yes. The light shone into my window and awoke me. I ran out and gave the alarm. As I came down on the opposite side of the creek, I distinctly saw a man just below the mill. He escaped from the circle of light, and hid himself among the trees."

"Is that so?" Indignation mingled with surprise in the man's voice.

"It is."

"Then he must be discovered. Did you recognize him?"

Mr. Ellis held his breath. But the man did not reply.

"Was it Ellis?"

"God forbid that I should accuse any one! No, I do not believe it was Ellis."

It did not take long for the fact that a man had been seen near the mill, when the fire was first discovered, to reach every person in the crowd that stood around the smouldering ruins.

And this fact was conclusive as to the incendiary origin of the fire. That settled, the next thing was to direct suspicion towards an individual. From lip to lip the name of Thomas Ellis passed in whispered utterances. Some believed and some rejected the charge; nearly all were shocked and sorrowful, for Thomas Ellis stood without reproach among his neighbors. All knew him as a man of integrity and kindness. Instinctively men shrunk from him in the crowd, or glanced at him furtively, and with suspicion or accusation in their faces.

As the fire in the burning mill fell lower and lower, and night stole back again, spreading her dusky mantle over the hills and valleys, despair settled down upon the heart of Mr. Ellis. He felt that he was doomed. As he moved, men drew back from him. Returning over the stream, at the point where he had twice crossed it that night, he went with slow steps back to his home, feeling like a criminal with the law officers close upon his track.

The white face of Mr. Ellis startled his wife like an apparition.

"O, Thomas!" she exclaimed, taking hold of him with a sudden grasp as he came in. "Are you sick, or hurt?"

"I am sick, Margaret," answered the unhappy man, in a voice so changed to the ears of Mrs. Ellis that it did not sound like the voice of her husband. And as he said this, he laid his head down upon her, and sobbed once or twice. A strong shudder ran through his frame; then he was calm and self-possessed.

"Margaret," he said, speaking in an even tone, "it is better that I should tell you all, that you may know exactly where I stand. I shall be charged with the crime of burning this mill, and the life of Adam Wheeler will be laid upon my head."

Instantly the form of his wife fell away from him as though she had been pierced with lightning. He grasped after her, clutching her garments, and just saving her from a heavy fall.

"But I am innocent, dear wife! My hands are clean!"

Mrs. Ellis caught her breath, shudderingly, and regained her half-extinguished consciousness.

"I am sure of it, Thomas," she murmured, faintly, "and no one will believe the cruel charge."

"All believe it now, Margaret. This I want you clearly to understand, that you may be prepared for the worst. There is no time for softening this announcement. The calamity is at our door. I am in God's hands, and he alone can save me. An hour from this time, and I shall, without question, be in the hands of an officer. Before separation, I must lay bare some things which it will be best for you to know, in order to save the possibility of a misjudgment of your husband. The evidence will, I fear, be strong against me, for I was near the mill when the fire broke out."

"You, Thomas! You near the mill?"

"Yes, Margaret. Don't shiver so! I am innocent."

"O, my husband! my husband!" Wildly Mrs. Ellis wrung her hands.

"I am innocent, Margaret. Innocent in act, but not innocent before God! Crime was in my heart, — maddened by desperation, — and I meditated the evil thing which has come."

"You will kill me, Thomas!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis.

"It had been better for us if we had died a year ago, Margaret." Mr. Ellis was strangely calm now, even as the surface of the sea is calm under the pressure of a heavy storm. "An evil power has been at work against me. All hell seems to have leagued itself for my destruction. I have tried to live at peace with my neighbors; I have tried to be just in my dealings towards all men; but even my virtues have been used as instruments of ruin. God help me!"

"O, my husband! God will help you. Remember what the Bible says: I am a very present help in time of trouble."

"I cannot look up in any hope, Margaret. Hush!" And Ellis glanced towards the door, bending his head in a listening attitude.

"I don't hear any one," said Mrs. Ellis, after hearkening for a moment.

Rising, the wretched man went from the room where they were sitting into one that adjoined, shutting the door so as to exclude the light. In a few minutes he came back, saying, as he rejoined his wife, —

“It is as I supposed. Men are guarding the house to prevent escape until a warrant for my arrest is obtained. And now, in the brief time that we are to remain together, let me open the door of my heart, that you may look in, Margaret, and know just what manner of man I am. As I told you just now, I am not innocent before God, for I did purpose the thing which has occurred. Driven to despair by the wrongs I have suffered, — seeing only ruin before me, — in an evil hour I yielded to the tempter. ‘If I must go down, he shall go down also,’ I said. You can never know how I battled with this temptation. But the darkness of midnight gathered around me. I could see light only in one direction, — a path only in one way, — and towards that lurid light, along that dreadful path, I at last consented to go. After you were asleep, I left the house, and crossed the creek, fixed in my determination to set Wheeler’s mill on fire. It had, I reasoned, no right to be there. It was built in fraud, and stood in violation of my rights. Either it must be destroyed, or my ruin was certain. I had appealed to the law, but the

law, instead of giving relief, had actually punished me as a transgressor. Self-protection, I said, is the first law of nature. And so I pressed blindly forward, resolved to do a deed, the bare thought of which now fills me with shuddering. I had gained the other side, and was approaching the mill, when a light glared up, and all objects around me became visible. Lifting my eyes, I saw flames bursting from the windows. My feet stood still. I was like one paralyzed. A strange thrill quivered along my nerves, my hair lifted itself, my flesh seemed to creep. It grew lighter and lighter. Day was not more intense. And there I stood, in the broad revealing glare, unable to stir.

“Even while I stood there, the cry of ‘Fire!’ came ringing out upon the air, and, turning, I saw a man leaping down towards the creek from this side. The instinct of impending danger gave life to my feet, and I started for a hiding-place in the woods. There I lay concealed for a while, and then came forth, intending to join in the crowd which had by this time gathered near the burning mill, trusting that I had

not been recognized by the man who had seen me in the circle of light made by the flames. But, as I came from the woods into the road, John Porterfield happened to be just at that point running towards the fire. Recognizing me, he put curious questions as to my being just there, which I did not answer satisfactorily. Strange union of suspicious incidents! This very man, not twelve hours ago, was a tempting devil at my ear. His suggestions gave fire to the half-formed purposes in my mind. He helped to lead me out of the right path; and no sooner was I astray, than his eyes saw the departure. Margaret, it seems to me as if I were God-forsaken! And yet I have one great consolation — the retribution which has fallen upon my enemy came not from this hand. Though evil was in my heart, there was a limit to the act. - Before God I am guilty, but not before men. If men condemn and punish, their sentence will be unjust; I shall not suffer for evil doing. O, my wife! believe me in this. I have told you all."

"O, Thomas! My husband! If all men

condemn thee, yet will I not." Mrs. Ellis drew her arms around his neck. "Thank God that you are innocent of this dreadful thing! Thank God that you were saved, even in the last bitter moment of overwhelming temptation. Let us take it as an assurance that these floods, which roar so fearfully, will not overwhelm us."

"And you do not doubt me, Margaret?"

"O, no, no!"

"If you doubt me, I am lost. If your faith fail not, I may have strength to bear up, though my name be cast out as evil. I shall be tried; and there will appear strong evidence against me. Even your faith may be shaken."

"No — no — no!" Mrs. Ellis flung back, almost indignantly, the suggestion. "My faith cannot be shaken. Has my head rested so long against this heart that I should not know it? You are innocent!"

"In just so far as I have said, Margaret. But, if destruction had not preceded my ready hand, the guilt of an awful deed would have been on my head. I was, for the time, no longer my-

self, Margaret. An evil spirit had taken possession of my will, and was driving me on to ruin. A few minutes, and I would have been lost. But my soul is yet safe. I can and do repent of the wicked purpose that was in my heart. I loathe it! I abhor it! Rather than have that sin fixed on my conscience, I would accept of death in any shape."

Both started and listened, and the faces of both grew paler. The sound of coming feet had reached their ears. A few moments of suspense, and then a hand was laid on the door. It was fastened; but Mr. Ellis walked firmly across the room, and drew back the bolt. Three men entered, one of them a county constable. The latter, placing a hand on Mr. Ellis, said, sternly, —

"You are my prisoner, sir!"

"On what charge?" Mr. Ellis did not falter in the least.

"On the charge of setting fire to Wheeler's mill," answered the constable.

"Of which I am innocent." The prisoner spoke in a firm voice, and looked into the

officer's face with so steady an eye that the latter dropped his gaze.

"No man will be gladder than I when your innocence is made clear," said the constable. "But my duty is to make the arrest."

"He is innocent!" The white lips of Mrs. Ellis bore this testimony. Then, as she came to her husband's side, and laid her hand upon him, she said, —

"Go, Thomas! He who knows your innocence will make it appear. Man's extremity is His opportunity. It has been growing darker and darker with us for some time, and now it is midnight. But the day will come. Even now it may be nearer at hand than you or I imagine."

She kissed him very tenderly, and then laid her head for a few moments on his bosom. All hearts were touched. There were unbidden tears in the eyes of strong men.

"Go, my husband." Mrs. Ellis stood up, strangely calm, in this trying moment. "Go, but fear not. A just God has you in his keeping."

And there they parted—he going forth into the dark night a prisoner, charged with a great crime, and she sitting down in the shadow of an impending calamity of such fearful magnitude that no hope was left but in God. Stunned and despairing, Mr. Ellis spent the hours until morning in the narrow boundaries of a cell. On bended knees, in tearful supplication, the same hours were passed by his heart-stricken wife. The gray dawn found them both asleep—he on a prison-bed, and she bowed in the attitude of prayer.

At the preliminary examination, held before a magistrate on the next day, Porterfield and others testified to remarks of a threatening character, as used by Mr. Ellis in regard to Adam Wheeler, one of the witnesses declaring on oath that the prisoner had, in his hearing, sworn vengeance against the latter, at the same time indicating fire as the means. The person who saw Ellis near the mill, as he ran down to the bank of the stream, could not swear positively to his identity; but his evidence was given in a way to strengthen suspicion. Porter-

field's statement about meeting Mr. Ellis emerging from a woods on the side of the creek opposite to that on which he lived, after the fire was some time in progress, with his unsatisfactory answers on being questioned, were so strong against him in the chain of evidence brought, that he was remanded to prison. Here he lay, bail being refused in consequence of the capital nature of the crime charged, for three weeks, or until the next session of the grand jury, when a true bill was found against him for arson, and also for murder, in causing the death of Adam Wheeler. The criminal court being in session, the trial came on almost immediately.

Two parties, strongly prejudging the case, were soon formed in the neighborhood, the one for and the other against the prisoner. Of those most active and bitter against Ellis was the Scotchman, Archibald Wing, who set himself to hunt up evidence with the keen scent of a bloodhound. Leading the opposition, and in favor of Ellis, was Harvey Tompkins, the man from whom Wheeler had bought the fifty acres

of ground lying on each side of the stream, at the point where the new bridge was located. The disgrace of her husband's position, and the fearful calamity that impended, instead of paralyzing the energies of Mrs. Ellis, developed latent resources that surprised her friends. She thought only of her husband's vindication and safety, and to this end bent all the powers of her mind. There dwelt with her no shadow of doubt touching his entire innocence of the crime with which he stood accused. Assuming this, the difficult thing, in the face of so many circumstances that pointed to him as an incendiary, was to discover the actual cause of the fire, and the true criminal, if the fire were not accidental. She did not waver in her belief that her husband's entire innocence would become manifest.

While many sympathized with Mrs. Ellis, few gave her encouragement. Even those who doubted her husband's guilt saw little chance for his escape from conviction. In the brief period that elapsed from the time the grand jury found a bill of indictment until the day

of trial, no facts came to light on which any sure defence of the case could be made. This circumstance alone stood out from the blank obscurity: A stranger had called at the house of Mr. Tompkins on the night of the fire, and asked for food, on receiving which he further asked the privilege of sleeping in the barn. To this request a negative was given, it not being considered safe, one or two fires having been occasioned in the neighborhood during the year, through the carelessness of strollers in using pipes or cigars. The man grumbled, and went on his way. A neighbor, living between the house of Mr. Tompkins and Wheeler's mill, very well remembered seeing a man go along the road, on the same night, in the direction of the mill, smoking. Passing near him in the road, he saw that he was a stranger, and set him down, at the time, as a "tramp." This was all. No other persons remembered having seen this man.

The day of trial came, and the prosecuting attorney set forth, in opening the case, the facts which he said they were prepared, by competent

witnesses, to prove. The heart of Mrs. Ellis scarcely moved during the fearful recital, and her blood seemed like ice in her veins. Then witnesses commenced giving in their testimony, and circumstance after circumstance was brought forth, one after another, each arranging itself as a new link in the evidence, until a chain of facts, one binding the other, held the accused in a dreadful bondage to apparent guilt that seemed impossible to be broken. Friends grew sad and pale; and even the judges' eyes turned, grieving, away from the wife's ashen face, as she sat near her husband, and leaning towards him. If others' faith in him wavered, hers did not.

After the testimony for the state had closed, Mr. Tompkins was called for the defence. He could bear clear testimony to the previous good character of the accused; but what of that, in the face of so many condemning circumstances? No impression was made on the jury. Then he related the incident of the strange man who had asked for the privilege of sleeping in his barn, and who was afterwards seen going towards the mill with a lighted pipe in his mouth. This last

fact was corroborated by another witness ; but it proved nothing. Then neighbor after neighbor took the witness-stand, and under the carefully-directed questions of Mr. Ellis's counsel, gave the strongest kind of evidence touching the social and moral qualities of the accused. He was just, humane, law-abiding. In the whole community, no man had shown himself a better citizen. He had stood among the people blameless, suffering, yet not doing wrong. But nothing was offered that gave any satisfactory explanation of the circumstances on which the prosecution rested for conviction. There were threats proved, and absence from home at or near the time when the fire broke out. A man was seen escaping out of the circle of light thrown from the burning mill, and Mr. Ellis appeared a little while afterwards, emerging from the woods into which the man had disappeared. As those woods lay on the opposite side from Mr. Ellis's dwelling, the circumstance was strongly against him. Mr. Porterfield testified to the prisoner's confusion of manner on meeting him, and to the improbable reason

assigned for his presence in that particular location.

The case being closed on both sides, counsel for the state commenced summing up the facts which appeared in evidence, setting forth, in a strong light, their character as conclusive touching the prisoner's guilt. As he progressed, all saw the hopelessness of Mr. Ellis's cause, and even those who had, up till this time, held fast to their faith in his innocence, now wavered, while some gave him up as guilty. On closing in a powerful appeal to the jury, that sounded like a knell of despair, Mrs. Ellis gave a low cry of anguish, that thrilled through the hushed court-room, and, sinking forward, was caught in the arms of her husband, by whose side she had remained sitting during all of this fearful trial.

Then a stillness as of death reigned through the crowded audience. The prosecutor sat down, a shadow of pain gradually displacing the flush of enthusiasm with which professional ardor had lighted up his face. In this pause the lawyer for the defence was about rising, when

a man of poor appearance stood suddenly forth, separating himself from the crowd, and advancing within the bar. In a quick, agitated voice, he addressed the judges, pointing at the same time to the prisoner. His words were, —

“If there is guilt anywhere, your honors, it rests not with him! I am the man referred to by witnesses as having been seen going towards the mill; and the mill was burned through my carelessness. I crept in at an open window, and lay down on some shavings under a work-bench, where I fell asleep. I don’t know how long I slept; but, on waking, I lighted a pipe, and in doing so dropped a match among the shavings, which caught instantly. In trying to put out the fire, I scattered the burning shavings around, and spread the flames so that I could not extinguish them. Alarmed at what I had done, I escaped from the mill, and fled away in the darkness, not stopping until I was miles distant. I knew by the great light in the sky above where the mill stood that it was all in flames, and would be consumed, but I did not know for days afterwards that a life had been lost. Fear

kept me pressing onward, and in a week I was nearly a hundred miles away from this place. I have returned because an innocent man is in danger. If punishment must fall upon any one, let it fall on me."

He ceased speaking, and stood bending forward towards the judges. Mrs. Ellis, who had sunk down under the pressure of a suddenly overwhelming despair at the conclusion of the prosecuting attorney's speech, started up like one awakened from a dream when this unlooked-for witness commenced giving in his testimony. The death-like paleness of her face changed as the man proceeded, until its ashen hue was lost in the flush of a new-springing hope.

"I said he was innocent, and here is the proof! Thank God! — thank God!"

Above the silence that succeeded the vindication of her husband, the clear voice of Mrs. Ellis thrilled, in these brief sentences, all the strained ears and oppressed hearts in that crowded courtroom. Upon only one face rested doubt and dissatisfaction, and that was on the face of Archibald Wing. There had been light and

triumph on it a little while before. Rising in the pause that followed, he moved to where his lawyer sat, and bending close to his ear, whispered a few words. All eyes were turned to him, and all noted the expression of his countenance. Immediately his counsel arose, and addressing the court, said, with some sternness of manner, —

“This is irregular, your honors. Will you order the witness to be sworn?”

“The clerk will swear the witness,” said the presiding judge.

The usual oath was then administered, and the witness placed regularly on the stand. With a clear voice he repeated his former statement, only with more particularity, yet not varying in the slightest degree from the main facts at first given. All the cross-questionings of the prosecution only made his evidence the clearer and more coherent. On a final submission of the case, the jury, without leaving the box, rendered, almost instantly, a verdict of “not guilty.”

Only one man expressed dissatisfaction, —

Wing, the Scotchman; and his language had in it so much of ill-will towards Mr. Ellis, that people were shocked and disgusted.

In the pause that followed this agitating trouble, with its sense of security and peace, Mr. Ellis folded his arms and sat down. So fearful a calamity as that which had threatened to destroy him utterly being turned aside, it seemed to him for a little while as if he were in an ark of safety. But his enemy was neither sleeping nor powerless. Open antagonism had produced undying hate. Wing had accepted his destruction as certain, and enjoyed, by anticipation, a fall from which there could be no rising; but at the very moment when he saw the bolt descending, and held his breath for the stroke, a hand unseen before turned it aside, and it fell harmless.

"He shall not escape me so!" Thus he spoke in his secret thought.

Only a few days elapsed before men were set to work upon the ruins of Wheeler's mill, and a contract entered into with a millwright by Wing for its reconstruction. When this was told to

Ellis, the old trouble came back again into his heart. The fierce battle through which he had fought his way to a brief peace left him only the more in love with peace. "Anything for peace," was the almost despairing cry of his heart, as he saw the enemy again marshalling his forces. If that mill were suffered to be rebuilt, nothing could save him from the ruin which had well nigh been accomplished. A little period of hesitation, a brief submission to an oppressive sense of weakness, and, then, nerving himself for a new, and, if possible, a more determined struggle, the miller called to his aid two of the best lawyers in the county, and commenced the war with an injunction to restrain Wing from proceeding any farther in the work of rebuilding the burnt mill.

Now the tide was turned. Wing had betrayed his malignancy at the trial, and the eyes of people were opened to see things in a different aspect from what they had formerly appeared. Ellis's true character and situation were more clearly seen. Many who, from a superficial or prejudiced view of the case, had

permitted themselves to espouse the side of Wing, were now satisfied that he was the aggressor and Ellis the victim. A new survey of the mill-dam was ordered by the court, and the wrong, as charged, in the lower level of Wing's flume, fully established, and the Scotchman required to elevate his flume by some eight or ten inches. Another and an authoritative reading was given to the contract entered into by Ellis and Wing for building the dam, and its true intent and limitations established by the court, which forbade Wing, or any person acting under his authority, using water for purposes beyond what the contract evidently contemplated.

"Peace and hope at last," said the miller, as he went back to his work again, with the protecting and defending arms of the law safely cast around him, "peace and hope at last; but through what a fierce and dangerous conflict! In the time to come, I will give no place to the enemy, — admit none of his encroachments, — accept the conflict with evil when it first moves against me, and stand by the right. If I had

done this in the beginning, when I held the advantage of a secure position, what loss, what trouble, what peril, might have been avoided! It shall be no more 'Anything for peace,' but 'Anything for the right;' for only in the right is man assured of safety."

II.

WISHING AND DOING.

Two little girls, named Grace and Phœbe Allen, while on their way from school one afternoon, saw a baby, not a year old, sitting on the floor of a poor woman's cottage. Its mother was in the yard, washing, and the baby sat all alone, playing with some clothes-pins and an old broken basket.

"O, the poor baby!" exclaimed Grace, as they stopped before the cottage—hovel were a better word, the place was so small and mean.

The baby looked up and smiled as the children stood in the door and spoke to it softly and tenderly. Out flew its little hands, fluttering like the wings of a bird, and its soft voice cooed and coaxed to be taken. But face and hands and clothes were all so dirty that neither of the children could take it in their arms. But they

played with the poor thing for a while, and then went away, leaving it crying after them.

“O, dear! Isn’t it dreadful to see a dear baby kept like that?” said Phœbe.

“I wish it was a clean, sweet baby. How nice it would be, when we came from school every afternoon, to stop and play with it!” answered Grace.

“So do I. But then wishing isn’t of any use. It doesn’t give clean faces and clean clothes. If it did, I know one thing, there’d be another sweet baby in the world.”

Grace stood still, and looked quite soberly at her sister. A new thought had come into her mind.

“Don’t you remember, Phœbe, what our Sunday-school teacher told us about wishing, and thinking, and doing?” she asked.

“No; what was it?”

“She told us that there were three things in every good work—wishing, thinking, and doing; and that the wishing always came first. Don’t you remember that papa said one day, ‘The wish is father to the thought,’ and we wondered what he could mean?”

“O, yes! And now I recollect all about what our teacher said,” replied Phœbe. “She told us that a good desire would always set us to thinking about how to do the thing we desired; and that when the thought grew active, it would soon find out the way.”

“And she said,” added Grace, “that desiring and thinking were of no account unless doing were added. And that’s just what has come into my mind about this poor baby. You say that wishing isn’t of any use. It doesn’t give clean faces and clean clothes. But thinking and doing may. Let us think a little, Phœbe. May be we can do something. Why, the way is clear already!”

And Grace clapped her hands together.

“How is it clear?” asked Phœbe.

“Just listen. Mother’s got plenty of old muslin, and calico, and linen; and if we ask her, I know she’ll be glad to let us make some slips and aprons for this poor baby. She’ll cut them out for us, and we can make a slip and an apron this very afternoon and evening, after we’ve got our lessons. Then to-morrow





Sewing for the Baby.

we can come and wash the baby, and dress it up. O, won't that be elegant?"

And Grace clapped her hands again.

"The very thing!" answered Phœbe. "And it will be so nice! It's a sweet baby, and when clean and dressed up will be lovely."

So the good wishes of the children had set their minds to thinking, and thinking made the way plain for doing. Their mother was so well pleased, when they told her about the baby, and what they wanted to do for it, that she helped them with their lessons for the next day, and then cut out a slip and an apron, and set them to work.

"Dear children!" said the mother to herself, as she looked in upon them every now and then, and watched their grave, sweet faces and nimble fingers. "Angels are very near to you, my precious ones; for only they would suggest such work as this."

On the next day, as Grace and Phœbe hurried home from school, they passed the mean hovel where they had noticed the baby. The door was shut, so they did not see the poor little

one, but they heard it crying sadly. In an hour afterwards they came back, Phoebe carrying a clean new slip, an apron, a petticoat, and a pair of shoes and stockings; and Grace with a basket, in which were a bottle of milk and some soft biscuits, besides soap, towels, and a brush and comb.

As they drew near they again heard the baby's wailing cry. On opening the door of the hut they found the poor little thing sitting alone on the floor. It stopped crying the moment it saw the children, and held out its tiny hands.

"O, you poor darling!" exclaimed Grace, in a voice of pity.

"Where's its mother?" asked Phoebe. "She can't have left it shut up here all alone!"

But no mother was to be found. She was away at one of the neighboring houses at work.

What a busy, bustling time there was! Phoebe got a pail of water, and Grace stripped off the dirty rags that covered the baby, and soon had its soft skin white and clean. Then she put on a little new shirt, and a muslin petticoat, and a

slip of blue and white chintz. Stockings and shoes came next, and then the golden hair was combed and curled.

“O, but isn’t he sweet?” cried Phœbe, as she stood off at a little distance and looked at the baby, all dressed so clean and neat, on her sister’s lap.

How pleased and happy the child was! Ever since he could know anything he had suffered from neglect. Such tender interest, such loving tones and words—they were strange as new, and very sweet and comforting.

A carriage containing a lady, young and beautiful, but with a pale, sad face, drew near.

“O, what a dear babe!” said the lady, as the carriage stopped. Grace and Phœbe had brought him to the door. She held out her arms, and the children let her take the baby into the carriage.

“Sweet! Sweet! O, such a darling sweet one!” cried the lady, almost wildly, yet with deep tenderness in her voice; and she hugged it closely to her bosom. “I had just such a

baby," she said, "but he left me and went to heaven." And then her eyes got full of tears.

"Whose is it?" she asked, still holding him in her arms.

Then Grace and Phœbe told her all about his sad and neglected life, and what they had done. And the lady wept as she bent over and kissed the baby that lay very still against her bosom, with his large brown eyes fixed earnestly, and with a kind of pleading surprise, on her face.

"There's his mother now," Grace spoke, suddenly, pointing as she did so to a woman with coarse, hard features coming down the road. It was too plain that she had been drinking. The lady waited until she came up, and then said to her, in a kind voice, —

"Are you very poor, ma'am?"

"Poor as poverty," answered the woman, in a blunt, rough way.

"You have a baby?"

"Yes, and sorry the day it was born! I can't stay with it and starve, nor take it with me into people's houses when I go out to work. And so I have to leave it crying, and come back to it

crying; and all day long I hear it crying, though sometimes I'm a mile away. It wasn't born with a silver spoon in its mouth, like the pretty baby in your arms, ma'am."

"What if I should offer to take your baby and care for him just as if he were my own?" said the lady.

"I'd say, 'Yes, and God bless you, ma'am!' for the baby's sake," answered the woman, quickly. "He's no comfort to one like me, and no comfort to himself; and I worry all day, when I'm out washing and scrubbing, for fear something will happen to him."

The lady spoke to the driver, and in a moment after the carriage was rolling swiftly away.

"No such good luck for baby or me!" exclaimed the woman, in a half angry, disappointed voice.

"It was your baby in the carriage," said Grace.

"My baby!" There came a sudden, wild, flashing light into the woman's eyes, and the children saw that she trembled all over. For

a little while she stood looking after the carriage; then she ran into her cottage. All was at once plain to her; for there were the old dirty rags of her child, and the pail of water, and towels, and brush, by means of which he had been transformed from an object of loathing to one of beauty.

"Children!" said the woman, in so stern a voice that they grew frightened, "is it true what you say? Was that my baby in the carriage?"

"It was your baby," they answered. "We had washed and dressed him all up so sweetly; and just then the lady came along, and took him in her arms, and eried over him, and said she had a dear baby like him in heaven."

The woman put both hands over her face, and, sitting down, sobbed and moaned for a good while. The children stood looking on, not knowing what to do or say. At last she got up, and went about her miserable room in a confused manner.

"I wonder if it isn't all a dream!" she said, stopping before the children. "What did you say? It was my baby dressed up so fine, and sitting in the lady's lap?"

"It was your baby," they said again.

"I'm thankful for the baby's sake," she murmured, in a low voice, half broken by a sob. "She'll be kind to it, I know by her looks."

Then the children went home, and told their wondering mother all that had happened. On the next morning, as they passed the poor hovel on their way to school, it was shut; and so it remained day after day. They never saw the poor woman again. She had gone out of the neighborhood. Six months afterwards she died in an almshouse. But the child had love and tender care, and all the pure joys of babyhood in a new and happy home.

III.

KILLING AN ENEMY.

"THAT man will be the death of me yet," said Paul Levering.

He looked worried, but not angry.

"Thee means Dick Hardy?"

"Yes."

"What has he been doing to thee now?"

The questioner was a Friend, named Isaac Martin — a neighbor.

"He's always doing something, friend Martin. Scarcely a day passes that I don't have complaint of him. Yesterday one of the boys came and told me that he saw him throw a stone at my new Durham cow, and strike her in the head."

"That's very bad, friend Levering. Does thee know why he did this? Was thy Durham trespassing on his grounds?"

"No, she was only looking over his fence. . He has a spite against me and mine, and does all he

can to injure me. You know the fine Bartlett pear tree, that stands in the corner of my lot adjoining his property?"

"Yes."

"Two large limbs, full of fruit, stretched over on his side. You would hardly believe it, but it's true. I was out there just now, and discovered that he had sawed off these two fine limbs that hung over on his side. They lay down upon the ground, and his pigs were eating the fruit."

"Why is Dick so spiteful to thee, friend Levering? He doesn't annoy me. What has thee done to him?"

"Nothing of any consequence."

"Thee must have done something. Try and remember."

"I know what first set him out. I kicked an ugly dog of his once. The beast, half starved at home, I suppose, was all the while prowling about here, and snatching up everything that came in his way. One day I came upon him suddenly, and gave him a tremendous kick that sent him howling through the gate. Unfortunately, as it has turned out, the dog's master

happened to be passing along the road. The way he swore at me was dreadful. I never saw a more vindictive face. On the next morning, a splendid Newfoundland, that I had raised from a pup, met me shivering at the door, with his tail cut off! I don't know when I have felt so badly. Poor fellow! his piteous look haunts me now. I had no proof against Dick, but have never doubted as to his agency in the matter. In my grief and indignation I shot the dog, and so put him out of my sight."

"Thee was hasty in that, friend Levering," said the Quaker.

"Perhaps I was, though I have never repented the act. I met Dick a few days afterwards. The grin of satisfaction on his face I accepted as an acknowledgment of his mean and cruel revenge. Within a week from that time one of my cows had a horn knocked off."

"What did thee do?"

"I went to Dick Hardy, and gave him a piece of my mind."

"That is, thee scolded, and called hard names, and threatened."

"Yes — just so, friend Martin."

"Did any good come of it?"

"About as much good as if I had whistled to the wind."

"How has it been since?"

"No change for the better. It grows, if anything, worse and worse. Dick never gets weary of annoying me."

"Has thee ever tried the law with him, friend Levering? The law should protect thee."

"O, yes, I've tried the law. Once he ran his heavy wagon against my carriage, purposely, and upset me in the road. I made a narrow escape of my life. The carriage was so badly broken that it cost me fifty dollars for repairs. A neighbor saw the whole thing, and said it was plainly intended by Dick. So I sent him the carriage maker's bill, at which he got into a towering passion. Then I threatened him with prosecution, and he laughed in my face malignantly. I felt that the time had come to act decisively, and sued him, relying on the evidence of my neighbor who had seen the affair. But my neighbor was afraid of Dick, and so worked

his testimony that the jury saw only an accident instead of a purpose to injure, and gave their verdict accordingly. After that Dick Hardy was worse than ever. He took an evil delight in annoying and injuring me. I am satisfied that in more than one instance he left gaps in his fences in order to entice my cattle into his fields, that he might set his savage dogs on them, and hurt them with stones. It is more than a child of mine dares to cross his premises. Only last week he tried to put his dog on my little Florence, who strayed into one of his fields after buttercups. The dog was less cruel than his master, or she would have been torn by his teeth, instead of being only frightened by his bark."

"It's a hard case, truly, friend Levering. Our neighbor Hardy seems possessed of an evil spirit."

"The very spirit of the devil," was answered, with feeling.

"He's thy enemy, assuredly; and if thee doesn't get rid of him, will do thee greater harm."

"I wish I could get rid of him."

"Thee must, if thee would dwell in safety, friend Levering."

The Quaker's face was growing very serious. He spoke in a lowered voice, and bent towards his neighbor in a confidential manner.

"Thee must put him out of the way."

"Friend Martin!" The surprise of Paul Levering was unfeigned.

"Thee must kill him!"

The countenance of Levering grew blank with astonishment.

"Kill him!" he ejaculated.

"If thee doesn't kill him, he'll certainly kill thee, one of these days, friend Levering. And thee knows what is said about self-preservation being the first law of nature."

"And get hung!"

"I don't think they'll hang thee," coolly returned the Quaker. "Thee can go over to his place, and get him all alone by thyself. Or thee can meet him in some by-road. Nobody need see thee; and when he's dead, *I* think people will be more glad than sorry. Thee needn't fear any bad consequences."

"Do you think I'm no better than a murderer?" Levering's astonishment passed to horror and indignation. "I, Paul Levering, stain my hands with blood?"

"Who said anything about staining thy hands with blood?" The Quaker was imperturbable.

"Why, you!"

"Thee's mistaken. I never used the word blood."

"But you meant it. You suggested murder."

"No, friend Levering. I advised thee to kill the enemy, lest, some day, he should kill thee."

"Isn't killing murder, I should like to know?" demanded Levering.

"There are more ways to kill an enemy than one," said the Quaker. "I've killed a good many in my time, but no stain of blood can be found on my garments. My way of killing enemies is to make them my friends. Kill neighbor Hardy with kindness, and thee'll have no more trouble with him."

A sudden light gleamed over Mr. Levering's face, as if a cloud had passed from the sun of his spirit.

"A new way to kill people."

"The surest way to kill enemies, as thee'll find, if thee'll only try."

"Let me see. How shall I go about it?" said Paul Levering, taken at once with the idea.

"If thee has the will, friend Levering, it will not be long before thee finds the way."

And so it proved. Not two hours afterwards, as Mr. Levering was driving into the village, he found Dick Hardy with a stalled cart-load of stone. He was whipping his horse, and swearing at him passionately; but to no good purpose. The cart-wheels were buried half way to the axle in stiff mud, and defied the strength of one horse to move them. On seeing Mr. Levering, Dick stopped pulling and swearing; and getting on to the cart, with his back towards his neighbor, commenced pitching the stones off into the middle of the road.

"Hold on a bit, friend Hardy," said Levering, in a pleasant voice, as he dismounted, and commenced unhitching his horse.

But Dick, pretending not to hear him, kept on pitching out the stones.

"Hold on, I say, and don't give yourself all that trouble," added Mr. Levering, speaking in a louder voice, but in kind and cheerful tones. "Two horses are better than one. With Charley's help, we'll soon have the wheels on good solid ground again."

Understanding now what was meant, Dick's hands fell almost nerveless by his side.

"There," said Levering, as he put his horse in front of Dick's, and made the traces fast, "one pull, and the thing's done!"

And before Dick could get down from the cart, it was out of the mud hole.

Without saying a word more, Levering unfastened his horse from the front of Dick's animal, and, hitching up again, rode on.

On the next day Mr. Levering saw Dick Hardy in the act of strengthening a bit of weak fence through which his (Levering's) cattle had broken once or twice; thus removing a temptation, and saving the animals from being beaten and set on by dogs.

"Thee's given him a bad wound, friend Levering," said the Quaker, on getting information

of the two incidents just mentioned; "and it will be thy own fault if thee doesn't kill him outright."

Not long afterwards, in the face of an approaching storm, and while Dick Hardy was hurrying to get in some clover hay, his wagon broke down. Mr. Levering, who saw from one of his fields the accident, and understood what loss it might occasion, hitched up his own wagon, and sent it over to Dick's assistance. With a storm coming on that might last for days, and ruin from two to three tons of hay, Dick could not decline the offer, though it went terribly against the grain to accept a favor from the man he had hated for years, and injured in so many ways.

On the following morning Mr. Levering had a visit from Dick Hardy. It was raining fast.

"I've come," said Dick, stammering and confused, and looking down at the ground instead of into Mr. Levering's face, "to pay you for the use of your team yesterday in getting in my hay. I should have lost it if you hadn't sent

your wagon, and it's only right that I should pay for the use of it."

"I should be very sorry," answered Paul Levering, cheerily, "if I couldn't do a neighborly turn without pay. You were right welcome, friend Hardy, to the wagon. I am more than paid in knowing that you saved that nice field of clover. How much did you get?"

"About three tons. But, Mr. Levering, I must —"

"Not a word, if you don't want to offend me," interposed Levering. "I trust there isn't a man around here that wouldn't do as much for a neighbor in time of need. Still, if you feel embarrassed—if you don't wish to stand my debtor—pay me in good will."

Dick Hardy raised his eyes from the ground slowly, and looked, in a strange, wondering way, at Mr. Levering.

"Shall we not be friends?" Mr. Levering reached out his hand. Hardy grasped it with a quick, short grip; then, as if to hide feelings that were becoming too strong, dropped it, and went off hastily.

"Thee's killed him!" said the Quaker, on his next meeting with Levering; "thy enemy is dead!"

"Slain by the weapons of kindness," answered Paul Levering, "which you supplied."

"No, thee took them from God's armory, where all men may equip themselves without charge, and become invincible," replied the Quaker. "And I trust, for thy own peace and safety, thee will never use any other weapons in fighting with thy neighbors. They are sure to kill."

IV.

THE BARGAINS.

"JAMES!"

"Sir."

"To-morrow is going to be a hard day with me. I shall have to pay about three thousand dollars in bank, besides a good deal of borrowed money. It will be necessary for you to sell as many goods as possible."

"Yes, sir."

"Sell at a profit, if you can. But sell, anyhow."

"Yes, sir."

The storekeeper remained for some moments silent, and then said, —

"Even if you have to take less than cost, sell. It will be much better than paying two per cent. a month."

"Yes, sir."

Further instructions were prevented by the entrance of a customer.

"Let me look at some of your thread lace, sir," said the lady, addressing the clerk, and seating herself, at the same time, quite leisurely by the side of the counter.

A box of laces was handed down briskly, the cover removed, and some twenty or thirty pieces, of all prices, patterns, and qualities, displayed to the eyes of the customer.

"A beautiful article," the clerk remarked, lifting a piece. "We have the best assortment in the city."

"Very pretty," the lady said, musingly, proceeding to examine piece after piece, until she had gone entirely through the box.

"Have you no other?" she then asked, with a smile and a bow, looking up innocently into the face of the clerk, who had stood patiently awaiting her selection from the very choice patterns before her.

"None, except of a very inferior quality, Mrs. Shannon."

"Let me look at them, if you please."

Another box was taken down, and a great portion of its contents turned out upon the

counter, when Mrs. Shannon discovered that none of the patterns in either box pleased her.

"They are very beautiful, Mrs. Shannon, and we will sell low," said the storekeeper, now coming forward. "I am sure you will not meet with a finer assortment anywhere."

"I don't know, Mr. Bradley, but I think Draper and Cordovan have a much better assortment. What do you ask for this?" lifting, as she spoke, with a careless, indifferent air, a piece of lace of exquisite fineness.

"That is four dollars a yard, Mrs. Shannon. And it is very cheap at that, I do assure you."

"O, dear, no, Mr. Bradley! I saw a piece at Griffith's much finer for three dollars."

"You must have mistaken the quality, ma'am. We bought our laces at the same house in New York, and paid the same prices. Now this article cost me every cent of three dollars and three quarters a yard by the piece. I have asked you only enough to cover the cost and charges, because I am anxious to sell. These are close times, ma'am, and we are all anxious to turn our goods into money as quickly as possible."

And Mr. Bradley attempted to smile with a pleasant air, but the effort was a failure. The customer's quick eye detected the counterfeit, and readily took her cue. Shaking her head with a knowing air, she replied, —

"It's no use to tell me, Mr. Bradley, that I don't know the quality of a piece of lace. I have seen too much in my time. Griffith's piece of lace at three dollars I would just as soon have as this."

The storekeeper stood musing for a few moments, and then said, —

"How much of it did you want, ma'am!"

"Only a few yards, sir."

"But how many, Mrs. Shannon?"

"O, some five or six yards."

"If you will take six yards, you shall have it for three dollars and a half, and that is a quarter of a dollar less than it cost me."

The customer shook her head.

"I am sure that is very low, ma'am."

"I couldn't pay that much for it, Mr. Bradley. It is not worth it. Griffith's is only three dollars, and if there is any difference, I like his best."

"I can't afford to take three dollars," said the storekeeper, in a half desponding tone.

"Well, if you will take three for it, I might be induced to buy half a dozen yards or so. I don't care a great deal about it, but am willing to give that, and no more."

The storekeeper hesitated a few moments. "Three times six are eighteen," he said to himself. "Eighteen dollars are too much to let go out of the store, and I so hard run.

"You can have it, ma'am, though it's actually throwing the goods away!" he at length said, in a tone and with a manner that showed the real reluctance he felt in sacrificing his goods.

"You can measure off six yards, then," the customer responded.

The six yards of lace were accordingly cut off and handed to Mrs. Shannon, with the stereotyped question, —

"Is there any thing else that I can show you, ma'am?"

"Have you a handsome assortment of silks?"

"Yes, ma'am; a large and beautiful assortment. What color would you like?"

"Let me look at a few pieces. I have hardly made up my mind yet."

Piece after piece was now taken down, opened, and the beautiful material within displayed. Each passed, in turn, a careful examination, and each was successively tossed aside with an air of dissatisfaction at the result.

"Don't you like any of those, Mrs. Shannon?" asked Mr. Bradley.

"No, sir."

"Are they not fine enough in quality?"

"Not so fine as I wish. I always like the very best of everything."

"I have a beautiful piece of plain colored Gros d'Afrique."

"Let me see that, Mr. Bradley," and the customer's face brightened.

The plain colored Gros d'Afrique was handed down from the shelf, and its shining folds opened to the eye of Mrs. Shannon.

"Is not that beautiful, ma'am? I think I have never seen so rich a piece of goods."

"It is handsome, Mr. Bradley. What is the price?"

"This piece of goods cost me three dollars a yard, and I will sell it for cost, if you will take the whole of it."

"How much is there in the piece?"

"Fifteen yards."

Mrs. Shannon shook her head.

"It is very low, ma'am."

"Indeed, I think it high."

"I'll give you two and three quarters for all you will bring me, ma'am."

Mrs Shannon again referred to the silk, holding it up to the light, examining the thread, and noting its rich lustre.

"You will take two for it, I know, Mr. Bradley," the customer said, with a captivating smile.

"No, ma'am, not of any one's money," was the positive reply.

"I'll give you two for it."

"I cannot take that, Mrs. Shannon. Only think, ma'am, it cost me three dollars. Surely you do not wish to get my goods at a price that would leave me a serious loss?"

"If you will sell it at two dollars, I will take the whole piece, Mr. Bradley."

"Indeed, ma'am, that is too hard. I should prefer leaving the goods on my shelf to selling at that rate."

And the storekeeper commenced folding the silk, and replacing it in its paper envelope, in quite an earnest, business-like manner. There was a brief silence, broken only by the rustling of the Gros d'Afrique, when Mrs. Shannon said, —

"If you will sell the piece for two and a half, I will take it."

Mr. Bradley paused, looked upward, as if engaged in calculation, and then drawing a long sigh, said, —

"Well, I suppose you must have it, Mrs. Shannon, but it is a terrible sacrifice."

"It's not dear at that price, certainly," Mrs. Shannon remarked, in a quiet, satisfied tone, and with a self-complacent air.

The silk was measured off and folded up.

"Have you any handsome shawls?" Mrs. Shannon now asked; "I shall want one this fall."

"We opened a case yesterday of most superb embroidered crape, just from New York."

"Let me look at them," said the customer; "not that I wish to purchase this morning, but I should like to see some shawls, so that I can make up my mind when I come to buy."

"O, certainly, ma'am."

And the storekeeper displayed several really beautiful articles.

"What do you ask for this?" referring to one of a very rich pattern.

"We cannot sell that shawl for less than one hundred and fifty dollars, Mrs. Shannon."

"One hundred and fifty dollars!" in tones of astonishment.

"Why, that is very low for such a superb article. We sold one of the same style precisely to Mrs. General Harper yesterday, immediately on opening the case, for one hundred and sixty dollars, — and this is the match one to it. I ask you but one hundred and fifty, because I know you deal close, and wish to accommodate myself as far as I possibly can to your views. Mrs. Colonel Jenkins was with Mrs. General Harper, and liked the shawl so much that she thought she would come in to-day and buy it. But as

she did not engage it, I do not feel bound to retain it for her, if you are pleased with both the shawl and the price."

"I think the shawl most beautiful, Mr. Bradley, but really the price is enormous."

"I make nothing on it, I do assure you, ma'am."

"Won't you take something less for it, Mr. Bradley?"

"I can't, indeed, ma'am."

"You'll take a hundred and twenty-five, I know."

"That would be doing a poor business, Mrs. Shannon. I had better shut up my store at once."

"Say one hundred and twenty-five, and you may send it home."

"Well, I don't care! I hate to disoblige a good customer. Take it along. But it won't do for me to sacrifice my goods in this way every day. If I do, I shall go to the wall before three months. Shall I show you anything else, ma'am?"

"Nothing more, I believe. How much do all these come to?"

“One hundred and twenty-five dollars for the shawl, thirty-seven and a half for the silk, and eighteen for the lace — one hundred and eighty dollars and fifty cents, ma’am.”

“That’s a pretty heavy bill. Call it one hundred and seventy-five dollars, even, Mr. Bradley.”

“That would be too hard, indeed, Mrs. Shannon,” and the storekeeper shook his head, forcing a smile on his countenance at the same time.

“Here’s just one hundred and seventy-five dollars, even money, Mr. Bradley. You’ll take that, I know,” and Mrs. Shannon smiled with an arch, self-complacent air. “Indeed, it’s all that I will give you — so you might as well take it with a good grace.”

“Well, if I must, I suppose I must, Mrs. Shannon. But, indeed, you are too hard on me.”

And as he said this he counted over the money, and threw it into the drawer.

“Will you send the goods home at once?” asked Mrs. Shannon.

“They shall go home immediately, ma’am.”

And then the customer made her bow and departed, delighted with the great bargains she had made out of the storekeeper.

As she withdrew, Mr. Bradley glanced knowingly at his principal salesman, and said, with a smile, —

“Did you see that operation, James?”

“O, yes. That was delightful!”

“That shawl cost sixty dollars.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“And the silk a dollar and a quarter a yard. I lost on the lace, but made it up handsomely on the other articles.”

“Rather too handsomely,” the clerk remarked, smiling in return.

“Well, it was her own fault, James. If I had asked her a fair price, she would have beaten me down, so that I would have been compelled to lose the sale or lose my profits. I had forgotten her real character when I asked her but four dollars a yard for the lace. Had I said six dollars, I could have got four and a half easily.

“It’s the only way to deal with such people. As a general rule, I can get more for an article

out of one of your real jewing customers, than out of a fair dealer, who buys at the price you name, if she buys at all."

"Yes, that is the only way to get along, and I believe nearly every retailer does the same."

"O, yes; it's the ordinary practice."

A customer here interrupted the conversation, and we are unable further to enlighten the reader on the subject under consideration by Mr. Bradley and his salesman. Enough, however, transpired to give a word to the wise.

In the mean time Mrs. Shannon returned home, and awaited, with some impatience, the arrival of her purchases. They were brought home in the course of an hour, and in a few minutes after a friend, an elderly lady, named Mrs. Cleveland, called to see Mrs. Shannon.

"Ah, good morning, Mrs. Cleveland, I am glad to see you. I've been out shopping this morning, and have made some rare purchases."

"Have you, indeed?"

"That I have. Just look at this splendid shawl."

"It is very beautiful, indeed, Mrs. Shannon."

"Ain't it? And what is better, I got it for something like twenty-five dollars less than cost."

"For less than cost!" Mrs. Cleveland asked, in tones of astonishment.

"Yes, indeed. The storekeeper said he made nothing at all on it at one hundred and fifty dollars. But I beat him down to one hundred and twenty-five. I saw plain enough that he was pushed for money, and would sell his goods at almost any price. It was only yesterday that Mrs. General Harper bought the fellow to it at one hundred and sixty dollars. Mrs. Colonel Jenkins wanted this one, and I have no doubt would have taken it to-day, at the same price paid by her friend Mrs. General Harper. When I heard that, I determined to have it, and so made my offer. Bradley thought a bird in the hand worth two in the bush. How disappointed Mrs. Colonel Jenkins will be when she finds the shawl gone! I am so glad I happened to see it before she called again. And just look at this elegant pattern of Gros d'Afrique. It cost three dollars, and was cheap at that price.

Rather than have missed it, I would have given three and a quarter for it. Now what do you think I got it for?"

"Really, I do not know, Mrs. Shannon."

"Well, I got it for two dollars and a half—far below cost."

"You did!" with a grave countenance.

"Yes, indeed. I saw that he would sell at almost any price, and so I beat him down hard. I could have obtained this piece of goods at two dollars a yard if I had held out a little longer."

"But don't you think it wrong to do so, Mrs. Shannon?"

"Wrong!" with a look and tone of astonishment. "Wrong! How in the world can you make it wrong?"

"Why, wrong, Mrs. Shannon, to ask a man to take less for his goods than they cost him, particularly when the goods are actually worth all that is asked for them?"

"Really, Mrs. Cleveland, I cannot understand you. I think it right, indeed, commendable, for every one to purchase goods as low as possible."

"But is it right to have so little regard for the

interests of others as to take advantage of their necessities to their injury? Really, I cannot see it to be right."

"I am sure, Mrs. Cleveland, that I can see no reason why I should pay a man more for an article than he is willing to take. Indeed, as it appears to me, I have nothing to do with his concerns. If he sells below cost, it is his look out, not mine."

"I cannot take the same view of things that you do, Mrs. Shannon. It seems to me that we should regard as carefully the interests of others as our own in dealing with them. Instead of being willing to buy an article at less than its real cost, when that cost is not above the market value, it seems to me that we ought to refuse to take that advantage, even if offered to us."

"Why, Mrs. Cleveland! I never heard of such a thing! I should call that cheating one's self."

"Not at all, Mrs. Shannon. It would be simply doing by others as we would wish others to do by us. It would be acting towards our neighbor from a principle of true charity."

"If you act from that principle, Mrs. Cleveland, you will be cheated at every turn."

"I differ from you. There is in the minds of most persons a wish to deal openly and fairly. A close customer makes a close salesman. I have no doubt that in most cases where persons cheapen goods, they are ultimately made to pay more for them than they are really worth."

"Well, I can tell you that I always cheapen when I buy, and I know very well that I never pay too much for an article."

Mrs. Cleveland smiled meaningly.

"You needn't laugh, Mrs. Cleveland. I know that no one pays less for dry goods than I do."

"There you are mistaken, Mrs. Shannon. As, for instance, in the case of this beautiful piece of Gros d'Afrique. It was only yesterday that I bought twelve yards of that very piece from Bradley, at two dollars a yard, which was all he asked me for it."

"That cannot be, Mrs. Cleveland! You must have bought from another piece of goods."

"No, it is the very same; I cannot be mis-

taken in the article. And now I remember that he said there were just fifteen yards left."

Mrs. Shannon's countenance fell instantly, and then grew red with indignation.

"Then he has cheated me shamefully!" she exclaimed, "and I'll make him refund me the half dollar on each yard."

"Say, rather, Mrs. Shannon," remarked her plain-spoken friend, "that you have cheated yourself. Mr. Bradley put the price up, because he knew that, ask what he would, you would never buy without beating down. It has happened that you did not beat down hard enough, and so had to pay for your error."

"But it's downright cheating, Mrs. Cleveland, and I'll expose him."

"If it is wrong for Mr. Bradley to take advantage of your ignorance, and receive from you more than an article is really worth, it is no less wrong for you to take advantage of his necessities, and pay him less than the article cost him. As I look at matters and things, the wrong is equal."

"I don't see it as you do, Mrs. Cleveland. I

do not compel a storekeeper to take less than cost for his goods. I tell him what I will give, and he is at liberty to sell on the terms I propose or not."

"Still, Mrs. Shannon, his necessity is his compulsion, and of this you take advantage."

"But for me to pay him a profit on his goods, when he is willing to sell below cost, would be a little too generous, it seems to me."

"He is not *willing*, but *compelled*; and surely it would be noble in any one to regard his circumstances, and take no advantage of it."

"As I said before, I cannot see it as you do, Mrs. Cleveland."

"I feel anxious that you should see it as I do, Mrs. Shannon; and, therefore, I will try to make it plainer to you. Imagine yourself a widow, compelled to do some kind of business for the support of your family. You set up, with a small capital, a dry goods store. Your capital is not sufficient to buy a good assortment, and you have to make purchases on credit. For a time you get on tolerably well, and are enabled to make your payments without trouble. But,

after a while, old goods and remnants accumulate, and customers make little bills, the aggregate of which is quite an important sum to you. You cannot now so readily meet your payments; and, of course, become more anxious to sell goods. Rather than let a customer go out, you will sometimes take cost for an article. A pressing demand for money will cause you, as a temporary expedient, to take even less than cost, when nothing more can be obtained from one who perceives your anxiety to sell, and takes advantage of it. Now placing yourself in the position that I have placed you, would you not think it very unjust for any one thus to profit by your necessities?"

Mrs. Shannon did not reply. This was a new mode of reasoning on the subject. Like too many others, she could not see the bearing of any rule of action until applied to herself.

"I hardly think the case parallel," she at length said.

"They are precisely parallel, Mrs. Shannon. A dry goods merchant does business, in most cases, for the benefit of his family, the members

of which are dependent upon him for a support. There are but few of them who are not, at some time or other, in similar difficulties to those I have imagined to exist in your case. Mr. Bradley I happen to know to be in precisely that situation. He is much in want of money just at this time. His anxiety to sell caused him to act upon what I think a false principle. He knew that you would cheapen his goods, and therefore he asked you a very high price. Perhaps, had he not been so much pressed, he would have asked only a fair price, and not receded from it."

Mrs. Shannon began to have a glimpse of the principle of action laid down by her friend. But it was only a glimpse.

"I suppose," said she, after a pause, "that my shawl is not such a great bargain after all. But I hardly think I have paid too much for it."

"Only fifty dollars more than Mrs. Harper paid for hers."

"What?"

"I was with Mrs. Harper when she purchased her shawl; and seventy-five dollars was all that

Mr. Bradley asked for it. His price was paid without a word, for Mrs. Harper had the fullest confidence in him. And you see now how honestly he is disposed to deal with a fair customer. Mrs. Jenkins was very anxious to have the fellow that you have bought, and she told me this morning that her husband was willing that she should buy it, and that she was going out at once to secure the shawl. She has doubtless before this met the disappointment that awaited her. The error that you have committed, Mrs. Shannon, in picking up that shawl so eagerly, to prevent Mrs. Jenkins from getting it, has resulted in a disappointment to you both. I trust, my friend, that you will not soon forget the lesson, and that its effect may be salutary."

Just then the servant handed a sealed letter, which was instantly broken open by Mrs. Shannon. It contained a bank bill for fifty dollars, and ran thus:—

"TO MRS. SHANNON. MADAM: The value of the shawl, that you bought of me this morning, was only seventy-five dollars, at which price the

profit to me is a fair one. But as I knew that you would not buy it unless I fell considerably on the price, I doubled it, to leave ample room to come down. You did not beat down hard enough, and so paid, and willingly too, fifty dollars more than it was worth. The silk you paid a half dollar a yard more for than my living price; but as you got the lace at a dollar a yard less than it cost me, these two items will balance each other. The fifty dollars enclosed will reduce the shawl to its real value. And now, madam, I shall be happy to wait on you again; but remember, that I shall only ask you a fair profit. Do not again tempt me to adopt a principle of action that I cannot help feeling to be wrong.

“Yours,

JOHN BRADLEY.”

A burning blush of shame covered the face of Mrs. Shannon as she finished this letter. She sat musing a few moments, and then handed it to Mrs. Cleveland. On reading it, that lady remarked, —

“I cannot say, Mrs. Shannon, that I regret the

occurrence of this incident. It will be a lesson to you that you can never forget."

"Indeed, it will. But pray, Mrs. Cleveland, do not mention it. I shall be mortified to death if it gets out. And, as to the shawl, tell Mrs. Jenkins that she is welcome to it, if she wishes to have it. Indeed, I shall never put it on, that's settled."

"Do not fear that I will mention it, Mrs. Shannon. I shall be far more gratified in seeing you act from higher principles than such as have influenced you, than in giving circulation to an affair calculated to wound the feelings of a friend."

"You are always kind and generous in your feelings, Mrs. Cleveland. Would that I could act from as high motives," Mrs. Shannon said, grasping the hand of her friend, and the other rose to depart.

"Try, then, to think right; and afterwards to act from these true perceptions of right. In this way you will gain the power to do unto others as you would wish others to do unto you."

And so saying, Mrs. Cleveland shook the hand

of her friend, and turned away from her door. The lesson was not lost on Mrs. Shannon. She never again indulged in the evil of trying to get goods at less than cost. The offer of her shawl to Mrs. Jenkins was accepted, and one was as willing to part with it as the other was to receive it.

As for Mr. Bradley, his conscience troubled him after Mrs. Shannon had left the store. Fifty dollars, he felt, were too much to take from her. While debating in his mind what to do, a customer from the country came in, and paid him an old bill of five hundred dollars. This determined the question in his mind, and produced the note and enclosure sent to Mrs. Shannon.

V.

LITTLE MARY.

"No, darling, not to-day; the snow is too deep," said her mother.

"But I want to so badly, mamma, dear!" and the sweet little face, shaded with disappointment, looked up with a pleading expression. "I'm just in my A-b abs, and I know every bit of my lesson. O, I must go to school, mamma! I've got rubber shoes, and I don't care a bit for the snow. Say yes — that's a dear, good mamma."

"Indeed, indeed, my pet, the snow is too heavy for your little feet," answered the mother.

Just then Mary's two ruddy-faced brothers, John and Andrew, came stamping in at the door, and shaking the snow from their feet.

"Is Mary most ready?" asked John. "It's time we were off to school."

"She's too little to wade through this snow,

my son," replied the mother. "I'm sorry, for she wants to go so badly. But she would be tired out, and might get sick."

Mary's eyes were full of tears, and John, who loved her, couldn't bear to see it. The snow was deep, and the distance to school too great for the little feet of pet Mary. John, now that he thought about it, understood this as well as his mother. He stood, looking serious, for a little while. Then, as light flashed over his face, he cried out in a cheery voice, —

"O, I've got it! Andy and I will ride her to school on our sled. Won't we, Andy?"

"Hurrah!" shouted Andy. "Bring on the sled! Won't it be fun?"

"O, yes, mamma! Can't I go? They'll ride me all the way;" and a glad light shone through the tears in her eyes.

"It's a long way, and I'm afraid the boys will tire themselves out," answered mamma. But it didn't take long to persuade her to let Mary go.

How gayly the children started off! Mary sitting on a box containing all their books, and with their dinner-basket on her lap, and John



The ride to School.

LAUDERBACH SC.



and Andrew galloping away like frisky horses. After a while Andrew, who was just a little lazy, and not half so unselfish as his brother, got tired of pulling, and said he would push. But he soon found pushing harder than pulling; so, as the sled was going down a slope, he got on behind without John seeing him, and rode for twenty or thirty yards to the bottom of the slope. If he had jumped off then, and commenced pushing again, John wouldn't have known about it; but he kept his place, and John, without looking back, strained and tugged at the sled that was twice as hard to pull as before. Now this wasn't fair in Andrew. But it's the way with lazy people; they not only neglect to help others, but often meanly exact service from others while they are idle. Not a suspicion of the cause of his heavier work crossed the mind of John until he heard a schoolmate, coming along with his sister, cry out, —

“Get off, there, you lazy fellow, and help John pull!”

Andrew's knees were off the sled in a moment,

and John, who was pulling with all his might, almost fell forward in the snow when his weight was removed.

Andrew laughed, and said he was only in fun; and good-natured John forgave him, and joined in the laugh. But Andrew felt a little mean; he couldn't help it.

Then the three boys took hold of the rope, and to their united strength little Mary seemed as light as a feather. How like gay horses they pranced and tossed their heads, flying along as the wind, and coming up to the school-house with merry shouts, that were answered by the groups of children before the door!

Mary had her lesson in A-b abs perfect, and there wasn't a happier child there when her teacher said, "You're a good little darling to come all the way in this snow, and say so perfect a lesson."

When school was out, two strong boys took hold of the rope with John, and away went the dear little scholar home again, swiftly and safely.

VI.

DISCORDANT STRINGS.

"OUR homes are like instruments of music. The strings that give melody or discord are the members. If each is rightly attuned, they will all vibrate in harmony. But a single discordant string jars through the whole instrument, and destroys its sweetness."

The speaker's voice was calm, but impressive. He was talking to a young man, whose flushed face gave evidence of an excited state of mind.

"You look at me, uncle, with eyes that say, 'You are the discordant string in this household.'" The young man's voice trembled with suppressed feeling.

"Frankly, Edward, I think you are," was the reply. "Every cross wind disturbs you."

"There are cross winds enough in this house to disturb an angel," was answered, with considerable feeling.

The door of the room in which they were sitting opened, and a girl entered. She smiled pleasantly as she looked towards her uncle. Crossing to a table on which lay some books, she selected a volume, and was taking it up, when Edward spoke out in an imperative tone, saying, —

“Don’t take that book, Nelly ; I’m reading it.”

“O ! are you ?” And the young girl dropped the volume. There were in voice and manner both sarcasm and rebuke.

Edward’s face flushed. He felt the meaning of what she said, and was offended. But for the presence of his uncle, he would have shot barbed arrows from his lips. Nelly selected another book, and went out in silence ; but her air was that of a person displeased. Had brother and sister been alone, there would have come loud discord jarring through all the household.

“You see how it is,” said Edward, appealing to his uncle. “I can’t speak but some one is offended.”

“There is, in speaking as in everything else,

a right way and a wrong way. Your way, just now, was wrong, and gave offence."

"Wrong, uncle! I merely said, 'Don't take that book, Nelly; I'm reading it.' For my life, I can't see any wrong way in that."

"You were annoyed, and half angry. I saw it in your face, and perceived it in your tones. Nelly was innocent of any purpose to offend or hurt."

"I'm not so sure of that, uncle. She knew I was reading that book, and came for it just on purpose. That was what annoyed me. She meant to annoy me."

Nelly was called by her uncle. She came in with the same quiet smile that rested on her face a short time before.

"Sit down, dear," said the uncle; and she sat down by the table, on one side of which her brother was leaning. She looked at him earnestly. His face was sober, but not ill-natured. Too often moodiness and ill-nature gave to it an unbeautiful expression.

"Nelly," said the uncle, a soft light just touching his grave lips, "I am going to ask

you a question, and I don't want you to answer it until you have given yourself a few moments for thought and self-control. When you took up that book a little while ago, were you aware that Edward was reading it?"

Nelly dropped her eyes. Her cheeks flushed warmer. Looking up in a few moments, she answered, —

"I knew he had been reading it, but I thought —" She stopped, and reflected an instant; then added, "No, I didn't think anything about it. But if I had known that he wanted the book, I would have taken another."

"Then you did not mean to annoy him?"

"O, dear, no, uncle! Why, Edward! Did you really think that?"

There was something so open and frank about Nelly's manner, that even the most sensitive mind could not have been offended.

"If he had not thought so, Nelly, he would not have opposed your taking the book in so imperative a manner. This is his excuse for an apparent unkindness."

"Indeed, indeed, Edward, you did me wrong," said the sister. "I never do anything purposely to annoy you — never! Somehow I am unfortunate, and all the while doing something that disturbs you; but, I declare, in truth, that I never do an unkind thing, or speak an unkind word, unless from momentary irritation, and then I am always sorry for it, and resolve, often in tears, that, do to me, or say to me what you please, I will never answer, except in gentleness and forgiveness. It is a daily grief to me, dear uncle," she added, with brimming eye, "that discord rules so often in our home instead of peace. We are all too sensitive, too quick, too ready to blame one another, instead of letting love and forgiveness dwell in our hearts. O, what would I not give to have it otherwise!"

She put her hands over her face, in momentary loss of self-control, and sobbed. Edward, who was just now seeing himself in a likeness never recognized before, was deeply moved by this unexpected exhibition of feeling on the part of his sister.

"It is all my fault, Nelly!" he exclaimed, under a sudden impulse of self-condemnation. "All my fault! I am so irritable, so ill-natured, so quick to think evil instead of good. But, in the time to come, God helping me, I will not be the jarring string in our household."

"Dear brother," said Nelly, rising and passing round the table to where Edward was sitting, — she laid her hand upon him, and he leaned towards her, — "let what will occur, never give room to the thought that I purposely annoy you. I have not done so, and I will not do so. And yet, between you and me, are too many angry passages. We are not patient enough with each other, not forbearing enough, not loving enough. Why may it not be different?"

"It shall be different, if anything that I can do have power to work a difference," replied Edward, with much feeling, as he gazed into his sister's face, and thought that he had never seen her look so beautiful.

"Keep these two chords in tune," said their uncle, "and the household music will rarely feel a throb of discord." And he drew an arm tenderly about each.

“My dear nephew,” — the uncle spoke freely, yet earnestly, when they were again alone, — “it is plain, as I have already said, that in this dwelling you have been least in harmony. An irritable temperament, and lack of perception as to your just relation to others, have blinded you to the real state of your life. I pray you to let the light which has penetrated your mind keep your vision clear, and the good purposes you have formed rule all your after conduct. Keep yourself in tune, and home discords will rarely occur.”

Ah, that untuned string which is forever throwing our household harmonies afloat on the waves of discord! In what home is it absent? And if one is most responsible, all are responsible in their degree. We need more patience and forbearance, more love, more self-abnegation. We are each too quickly disturbed, and too ready to give back anger for anger. If one string gets out of tune, let all the rest be drawn more tightly, and in their harmony will be subdued or stilled its harsh vibrations.

VII.

PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

"DID you observe the manner in which Mrs. Brentwood treated Mary Clive?"

"Yes."

"I wonder what she can mean by it? She pulled her dress away when Mary sat down on the sofa near her, as though taint were in the touch of her garment. Her bearing was cold and repellent."

"Mary Clive is, in everything that goes towards excellence of character, her superior," said the other.

"So I read the two women," answered the first speaker. "I know them both intimately. Mrs. Brentwood is worldly, selfish, and critical in her estimates of other people; readier to see evil than good. She has an active, but not a reflective mind; sees a great deal on the outside of things, but is away from her element,

and loses herself, when she attempts to go alone beneath the surface. She has no deep experiences; no fierce conflicts; no great trials and temptations. She has not passed through the fire; and, in my opinion, the reason is clear: there is not fine gold enough in her character to stand the fire. She would be consumed in the furnace out of which such women as Mary Clive come purified for heaven."

"Do you know anything of Mary Clive's early life?" asked the other.

"No; I take her as I find her. That she has passed through trials and temptations, any one can see. She has suffered, and grown strong, and pure, and sweet. Her inner life touches your life, and you feel better for the contact. An hour passed with Mary Clive is never an hour lost. Your higher nature has been stirred. You feel the impulse of truer ends. Your charity is broader, and full of desire. But, your question recurring, may I ask if you know anything of Mary Clive's history?"

"Yes."

"There have been dark passages?"

"Yes; and Mrs. Brentwood knows all about them."

"Ah! is that so?"

"Another time we will talk about this," said the friend. "Come and see me, when you have a leisure afternoon. I thought you knew something of her former life, and understood its lessons. The story will not fail to reach your ears. Mrs. Brentwood will tell it on the first good opportunity, and it is best that you should hear it from one who judges of a life from its present good, instead of its past and rejected evil."

A few days afterwards the ladies met, when the subject was renewed.

"Mary has passed through the furnace," said the one who was ignorant of Miss Clive's early history.

"Yes; and the flames left, for a time, the smell of fire upon her garments. It came to the nostrils of Mrs. Brentwood, and has lingered there ever since. She never sees or thinks of Mary without perceiving the unpleasant odor."

"There is no smell of fire upon her garments now!"

"My sense perceives none. To me she is pure and clean. And, knowing her intimately, if she were not pure-minded, I should be quick to perceive it."

"I have noted this difference between her and Mrs. Brentwood," said the other. "Mary's conversation never touches the indelicate, and if she talks of persons, it is to speak of the good in them. Her charity for people is a striking feature in her disposition. And, so far as my intercourse with Mrs. Brentwood has gone, I find her the very opposite. She is quick to see faults in others, and, to all appearance, takes pleasure in exposing them. Her mind seems to be full of petty social scandals, and she speaks of them with a piquancy of style and feeling that shows how much she delights in them. There is a certain pretence of being shocked at the evil things related; but the veil is too thin to deceive any one of close observation. To me she is an essentially impure-minded woman."

"I have reached the same conclusion," was answered.

"And such a one as she presumes to draw back

her garments from the touch of Mary Clive, as if there were pollution in the contact !”

“Yes. It is the old story of the Pharisee and publican in another sphere of life.”

“Mary has sinned.”

“Who has not? The heart is corrupt by nature. Away back, in the spring-time of her years, a shadow dropped down upon her life. Her childhood was not favorable. The lot of many is cast with the undisciplined, the impure, or the vicious. She was exposed to many bad influences, and temptation crept about her feet, like a serpent, even from the very beginning. Her mother was a weak, frivolous woman, and, I fear, not blameless in conduct. Her husband, a man of strong feelings but good life, left her, and tried to get his children away. A suit for the purpose was about being commenced, when he died, and they were left to their fate. Happily for them, they all soon went the way their father had gone, except Mary. She was left with her mother, and exposed to malign influences.

“Very different was the childhood of Mrs.

Brentwood. Her father and mother were religious people, living in harmony, and guarding their children from all apparent evil. I fear, that if she had been subjected to the influences that surrounded Mary Clive, she would never have passed through them, and risen into a useful and virtuous life. If, watched and protected as she was by parents, and kept from contact with things impure, she is not now so much in love with good as to search for it in her friends and acquaintances, but so attracted by things evil and impure as to see them first of all, how would it have been with her if her young life had been cast in the very sphere of evil? I fear that she would not have passed the ordeal safely.

“At the age of nineteen, Mary Clive was found by a lady, under circumstances of a painful character. This lady was a Christian in the true sense, and understood something of what our Lord meant when he said, ‘Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance;’ and so she became a friend to Mary in the true sense, — learned all about her child-

hood, and the associations by which she had been surrounded; and looked with a wise intuition, born of charity that seeks to do good, down into her heart and character, — finding there much to encourage the hope of a truer development and a higher and better life in the future. Her first step was to lift her from amidst the external things by which she had so long been surrounded, and to place her in a position favorable to the growth of order, virtue, and right principles. Very quickly the first good seeds cast into the ground of her mind showed signs of germination. Flower and fruit in due time rewarded the lady's care and solicitude. From the very day Mary Clive felt the pure life of this Christian woman touching her own life, a virtuous strength came to her, as if by a kind of transfusion. It was as if she had suddenly stood still, and instead of going a single step farther in the wrong way, had begun to move steadily in an opposite direction, not once pausing to look back, except to shudder at the evil she had suffered and escaped.

“From the beginning, this lady remained her

kind and faithful friend. She found qualities in Mary that soon won upon her tenderer feelings. Being childless, the warm, demonstrative, and filial-like love of Mary touched her with a new-born sense of pleasure. Gradually the girl grew nearer and nearer; creeping at last into her heart, and living there until death wrought a separation. This lady's position in society established that of Mary. Were there no such evil-disposed women as Mrs. Brentwood in the circles where Miss Clive now moves, not one in twenty would dream that an evil shadow had darkened her young life."

"Has she an income?"

"Yes. On her friend's death, she found herself well provided for. The high character, pure life, and noble Christian virtues of this friend, known to small and great in the community, is the answer that right-thinking people give when your Mrs. Brentwoods try to hurt Mary by unveiling the past. Even though dead, she yet throws about her the mantle of protection."

"Has Mary's life run smoothly since the time it left the wilderness?"

“With one or two exceptions. She was a few years ago quite attractive in person. This, with her social position, her intelligence, and the sweetness of her character, made her an object of attention. She did not court, but shrunk from this attention, particularly when it came from the other sex. It was hardly possible that she should fail to lead some heart captive, or escape the passion of all passions deepest and most absorbing. A young man belonging to one of what are called our ‘best families’ (best in a mere conventional sense) paid her close attentions, and finally offered his hand. She did not accept the offer, but referred him to her friend and benefactress, from whom she exacted a promise that the history of her early life should be told without disguise. I do not think the young man’s better nature was shocked by the disclosure, — his subsequent life has disproved any such idea, — but he shrunk away from her, withdrawing his offer of marriage.

“The hurt was severe, and showed itself in a pale face and a more quiet, inward-looking manner. The young man married about a year

afterwards, but selected unwisely. The family was all right, and the maiden's record fair; but the current of her impulses, which had been hidden from observation, when it found free course and touched her outward life, left a stain. He had turned from one whose soul, purified by the touch of divine truth, had something of vestal purity, and mated himself with glossed corruption! You will be surprised to learn that, in spite of scandals, grounded, I fear, in cause, Mrs. Brentwood holds intimate relations with this person, whose family position has covered a multitude of sins with the mantle of a false charity."

"It is a high consolation to know," was answered, "that God's judgments are not as man's. That he looks at the heart, and if he finds it pure, accepts the life; but if it is not pure, does not accept the life, however orderly it may be in external things. As seen by angels, the soul of one like Mrs. Brentwood is dark, deformed, and repulsive—a cage of unclean things; while that of one like Mary Clive is white and beautiful. Shall you or I hesitate, because of the past, as to

which of these shall come nearest? — as to which shall have our truest regard and confidence?”

“No, no,” replied the friend. “The really pure are they who, in strong trial and temptation, have overcome evil. Your self-esteeming, holier-than-thou Pharisee, is not pure. It is in the touch of *her* garments that a taint lies; not in that of hers whose garments have been purged by celestial fires.”

VIII.

THE TWO VASES.

"Do you admire them?" said the shopman, in that bland, enticing voice so peculiar to the true type of his class.

"They're charming!" answered the young man with enthusiasm. "Charming!" and he lifted one of the elegant Birmingham glass vases from the shelf near which he was standing, and held it towards the light. "Does it not seem like a very miracle of art? Could anything be more perfect than this wreath of green ivy, twining with the very grace of nature around lozenge-shaped ornaments, rich in color as ruby wine?"

"Let me send them home," said the shopman, in his soft, bewitching voice.

"Thank you; but I can't afford to indulge in luxuries of this kind," was the prompt reply.

"They're cheap; the cheapest pair of vases,

style and quality considered, that I have in the store."

"What is the price?"

"Only twenty-five dollars."

What a light thing the shopman's voice made of twenty-five dollars! A mere trifle, scarcely worthy of a thought. But the tempted customer shook his head, as he put the vase which he had been holding in his hand back upon the shelf, saying, —

"Too heavy for my pocket."

"O, that's only a fancy!" said the shopman. "Let me send them home. It's of no consequence about the money; that will do at any time. Surprise your wife! Think how delighted she will be with these charming ornaments for her parlor mantel-piece. I know ladies' weaknesses in this direction as well as the next man."

And he took back from the shelf, where his customer had returned it, one of the glass vases, and began calling attention to its peculiar points of beauty.

"It's of no consequence about the money!"

Ah, that little sentence was doing its work in the young man's mind. He was a bookkeeper, receiving only a moderate salary, and not able to indulge in the luxury of twenty-five dollar vases; and, much as he might have desired to possess the pair now offered, the question of cash down would have settled the matter without debate. But it was of no consequence as to the money! This put a different face on the matter. He began to look with more strongly-favoring eyes upon the richly-colored and exquisitely-cut and moulded ornaments. He saw them gracing his little parlor, and giving it a new attraction; saw the pleased face of his wife; heard the admiration of friends and visitors; felt the delight of possessing such exquisite pieces of art.

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

The shopman knew enough of Byron for trade purposes, at least. This was one of his favorite quotations. It was true poetry to him, for it put money into his pocket almost daily, turning, as it so often did, the customer's nicely-equipoised debate on the side of consent.

"A perpetual enjoyment," said the young man, in his thought, responsive to the tempter's suggestion from the poet, "and not only to myself and wife, but to our friends."

"I will send them home, Mr. Talbot; I want you to possess these vases. They are unique of their kind, and have been more admired than anything in the store. The sight of them will be as sunshine in your home. Every house should have in it articles of true taste and beauty. Money is always well spent in this direction. Nothing pays so well. Beauty educates the mind, and lifts us above the rude and depraving things of common life; gives happiness, in short. So I will send them home, and, at your own convenience, you can pay for them. Take two, three, or four months — any time will suit us."

"Very well," answered Mr. Talbot; "if you will do so, I can't help myself, of course. I think the vases exquisite, and I know my wife will be charmed with them."

From the store in which our young friend's prudence had been overcome by what, in his

case, was little less than a covetous desire to possess the beauty his eyes looked upon with admiration, he went to his work for the day, not feeling altogether satisfied with himself. Prudence had urged him not to buy the vases, and endeavored to make him see that it would be wrong to incur any debt, seeing that his light income barely sufficed to reach the expense of their frugal housekeeping. But in a moment of weakness he had put aside the suggestions of prudence. Now, however, the clear voice of this true monitor was heard again, disturbing his self-satisfaction, and throwing a shadow over the sunshine of anticipated pleasure.

Very impatient was Mr. Talbot for evening to come, when, turning from his desk, a free man, he could go home, look upon his beautiful vases, and witness the pleasure of his wife in this charming addition to her little parlor. At last the sun went down in the brief day of closing autumn, and our young friend bent his light steps homeward, thinking of scarcely anything besides his new possessions, and the higher tone of pleasure it would give to the meeting with

his wife. He expected to see the parlor lighted up, and to find her sitting there in silent admiration of the beautiful objects he had bought. But no; all was dark as he came in sight of his dwelling. He felt a pressure of disappointment. Was it possible that the vases had not been sent home? He feared that it was so. His key rattled in the latch, and he pushed open the door. The gas flickered dimly in the passage, turned low by the prudent hand of his wife. As the jar of the closing door broke along the stillness, Mr. Talbot listened to hear the sound of his wife's footsteps, in a sudden start, on her way to meet him. But all remained silent. He drew off his coat, and hung it upon the rack, his feelings considerably dashed.

In their little sitting-room Mr. Talbot found his wife busy with her needle-work. She looked up with her usual welcoming smile and pleasant words; but Mr. Talbot thought neither the smile nor tone as heart-free as usual. Perhaps this was because his picture of the meeting had been too warmly tinted in imagination.

“Was anything sent home to-day?” He could not keep back from this uppermost subject in his mind.

A light glanced over the face of Mrs. Talbot; but it was not the warm, glad light her husband looked to see.

“Yes; two beautiful vases. Whose are they?”

“Ours.”

“No!”

“Yes, ours — yours, Mary. I bought them for you. Are they not exquisite?”

The light went fading out of Mrs. Talbot’s countenance.

“Yes, they are very beautiful, Charles; but too handsome for our plain parlor.”

“Not a bit of it, Mary. Just what they wanted. The mantel-piece has always looked so meagre, with only a pair of china match-boxes, and that little painted imitation of Bohemian glass. But these are gems of art and beauty — things to give the mind a perpetual pleasure. Come! I must see them.”

And Charles Talbot drew his wife away to the

parlor, which was soon glowing in light from every lighted burner in the room.

"What was the cost?"

Ah! how often does this question come as a damper to enthusiasm?

"Only twenty-five dollars." Mr. Talbot's voice lost a little of its firmness.

"Twenty-five dollars! Why, Charles! What could have possessed you?"

The young, prudent wife, who felt daily how closely their income held them to the necessity of a most careful expenditure, was betrayed into a tone of disapproval stronger than was at all agreeable to her husband.

"I didn't have to pay the money down," he said, in vindication of himself, yet with a coldness that came as a chill to the feelings of his wife.

Already the pair of vases, which were to bring a new pleasure into their home, had come between them, and they stood farther apart, instead of nearer together. Instinctively was this felt by Mrs. Talbot; and she tried to rally herself, and look pleased and interested. But

she had betrayed her real feelings and sentiments; and to cloak them now was no actual concealment.

“They are beautiful,” she said, with an interest in her manner that only in part deceived her husband, taking one of them from the mantelpiece, and holding it to the light; “and I don’t wonder you were tempted. What a rich ruby! It comes to the eyes laden with a sense of enjoyment, just as a deep, pure organ-tone comes to the ear.”

“And they are really very cheap.” Ah! that was not aptly said for Mr. Talbot. No, they were not cheap for him—not cheap if the price had been twenty, or even fifteen, instead of twenty-five dollars, for he was not well enough off in the world to afford this luxury. And here let the remark be made, that all articles of taste and luxury—pictures, vases, statuettes, and the like—which cannot be afforded, that is, which cannot be obtained without debt, or the deprivation of things essential to use and comfort, always bring to the possessors more pain than pleasure. Their beauty soon dims, and the

sight of them is always attended with a certain sense of disquietude. Covetous eyes take them in greedily, and will not be satisfied with anything less than possession; but after possession their charm is gone.

“And they are really very cheap.” No, it was not aptly said; and, as the thought, how very dear they were for them, crept through the mind of Mrs. Talbot, the fine enthusiasm of her manner died away. She returned the vase she was holding to the mantel-piece, and a sigh—it was involuntary—stole out upon the air.

One after another the gas lights were turned off by Mr. Talbot, in a kind of desperate deliberation, and in silence he and his young wife returned to their sitting-room. She took up the sewing which had been laid down on his entrance, and bent close over it; and he drew a newspaper from his pocket, and commenced looking through its well-filled columns for something of interest. But nothing that he tried to read took hold of his mind. Steadily his thought turned itself away from things of

general interest, and hovered around his pair of vases, the purchase of which he was already soberly regretting. Onward to the pay day his mind was beginning to reach, and the difficulty of saving twenty-five dollars from their income had a disheartening look. The idea of being in debt was producing an uncomfortable feeling. "Two, three, or four months." So the storekeeper had said. After two months, then, the twenty-five dollars would be due; and four months was the limit of time. The sum could not be paid in two months, — the quarter's rent would interfere, — and so, from that period, he would be in the uncomfortable state of a debtor not able to pay, borne with, two months longer, on sufferance. How native pride and independence felt a sting of shame!

"What are you thinking about, Mary?" Mr. Talbot, who, looking for some time over the top of his unread newspaper at the shadowed face of his wife, spoke out suddenly, and Mrs. Talbot looked up in a startled way, flushing, as though detected in something she would rather conceal.

"Will you give a penny for my thoughts?" she replied, endeavoring to appear indifferent as to their nature.

"Yes; or a dollar, if you will. So let me see them." Mr. Talbot tried to smile in a pleasant way, but the mask did not fairly hide the real face that was clouded beneath. His wife answered, —

"We cannot always determine the nature of our thoughts. They are often unbidden and unwelcome guests; and it is better, at times, to let them pass unspoken."

"Your thoughts may always be spoken to your husband, Mary," said Mr. Talbot, his voice falling into a tenderness of tone that showed the intrusion of right feelings.

But Mrs. Talbot kept silence.

"You were thinking of the vases, Mary."

She did not reply.

"And of my weakness, folly, and extravagance —"

"No, no, Charles. That is no right reading of my thoughts." She spoke with a still heightening color.

"Then open the page, and let me read them just as they have recorded themselves. You were thinking of the vases. How did your thoughts run? Don't be afraid of hurting or offending me. I want to see this matter with your eyes. We cannot afford a pair of twenty-five-dollar vases. You thought that."

"Yes."

"Well; and what besides?"

"I thought of Hannah sleeping on the sack-ing, because we had not been able to spare the money for a mattress or bed."

The parted lips of Mr. Talbot closed tightly, and his forehead drew together.

"And of the contrast between those showy vases and our plain parlor furniture—a contrast that will always be displeasing to our eyes, and a cause of remark by our visitors. Our extravagance and lack of good taste will, most likely, be the burden of our friends' comments."

"May be you are right," said Mr. Talbot. "Go on. What more of your thoughts?"

"The pay day must come. Will you be able

to spare twenty-five dollars in three or four months from this time any better than you can spare it now? And will not this thought be all the while troubling you, and taking from the vases all beauty in your eyes? And suppose you can't pay for them when the price is due? The thought of your being in debt, and of the humiliation that must follow, really sickens me. Even a debt of twenty-five dollars may rob a man of all true enjoyment in life."

A long sigh struggled up from the young man's bosom.

"Your thoughts are of the right tone, Mary," he replied, with a sober face. "What a fool I was to let that smooth-tongued shopman entice me from common sense and common prudence. I should have known that no real enjoyment could lie for us in mere external beauty, gained at the price of self-disapprobation and debt."

That was one of the dullest evenings Mr. and Mrs. Talbot had spent together for a long time. A shadow, as of some evil, seemed to rest on their spirits. They did not venture into the parlor again to look at their elegant vases, but instinctively avoided the apartment.

The tranquil sleep that usually came to the pillow of Mr. Talbot did not visit him that night. His mind was excited with thoughts about the vases; and these kept him awake until after the small hours that strike on the side of the morning. When sleep came at last, he had one of those vivid dreams that surprise us when we recall them, by their strange and minute semblance to reality. It extended, apparently, through months, during all of which time the vases were a source of the keenest annoyances and mortifications. There were constant demands for the twenty-five dollars, and no ability to pay.

"You will have to wait longer, sir." He awoke long before day dawn, speaking these words aloud.

"Who will have to wait?" asked Mrs. Talbot; she was not really sleeping. Something had disturbed her rest, and once fairly awake, unpleasing thoughts about the vases had come to her mind in unwelcome intrusion, and kept her from oblivion again.

"O, it's nothing — nothing! I was dreaming," he answered.

"Dreaming about what?"

But Mr. Talbôt did not reply. A suspicion of the truth crossing the mind of his wife, kept her from pressing the question.

"If mere shadows can so affect us," was the thought of Mr. Talbot, as he lay with the vivid impression of that dream still in his consciousness, "what pain must be in the substance from which it is projected. If a vision of debt is so full of humiliation, the actuality must be terrible!"

When Mr. Talbot left his house next morning he had two packages in his arms. They were the Birmingham vases.

"What are these?" asked the shopman, whose bland persuasions had won consent from his customer on the day before, as Mr. Talbot came in, and laid his two packages on the counter. There was only the faintest semblance of a smile on his face now, for he saw, by the shape of the packages, what was in them, and understood that the vases were to be returned. Without answering, Mr. Talbot removed the enveloping paper.

"Well, sir?" The shopman looked at the vases, and then at his customer, in a mystified, questioning way, affecting not to understand what was clear to him as a sunbeam.

"I must ask the privilege of returning these articles," said Mr. Talbot.

"Why so?" The voice cut rather sharply.

"My wife doesn't care about them—in fact, I can't afford to indulge in superfluities of this kind." The young man's face colored. His pride was touched. He felt humiliated. The purchase was a fair one, and there was, in his view, something of meanness in receding from a bargain. Still he must get the vases off his hands, for to keep them would be to retain a source of perpetual annoyance.

"It's against our rule." How cold the voice! How impassive the manner! "We might exchange them. I don't see that we can do any better."

The worst was over with Mr. Talbot. He grew hard and resolute under this changed aspect of the shopman.

"I am sorry," he said, speaking firmly, "to

be obliged to return these vases. But it is better for you and me both that it should be done. You will expect your money, and it may not come when you look for its receipt. The vases are handsome, and will not wait long for a customer."

And saying this, the young man turned from the counter. As he did so, the words, "This is your property, not mine, and it will remain at your risk," were thrown after him, angrily. He came back, and said, in a quiet voice that entirely concealed the disturbance he felt, —

"Will you do me a favor, Mr. Jenkins?"

"What?"

"Sell these vases within two months, — the shortest time in which I was to pay for them, — and send me a bill for the difference between what they bring and twenty-five dollars?"

"I'd rather you'd keep them."

"That I am resolved not to do, and for the reason already given. I'm sorry you have made me feel so uncomfortable about a matter of but little importance to yourself. Oblige me in what I ask. If I am ready to make good any de-

ficiency in price, why compel me to keep articles that I do not want?"

There was an unamiable, muttered acquiescence in this proposal, and Talbot retired, feeling more disturbed and unhappy than he had been for years.

"If some of my friends, whom I know to be indulging in elegancies and luxuries beyond their means, have anything of my experience in this the first transgression, I pity them!" said the young man, feelingly, to himself, as he hurried along the street on his way to the counting-room where he was employed. "I will keep it in perpetual remembrance, as a wall of protection around me in future temptations."

That evening, as Charles Talbot stood in his plain but neatly furnished parlor, and looked at the two china match-boxes and imitation Bohemia vase that decorated his mantel-piece, they seemed so in harmony with everything else in the rooms, that a real sense of pleasure stole into his heart. They were not elegant and costly, but as being the best he could afford

in the way of ornament, had more power in them to give peace of mind than lay in the richest works of art and skill obtained at the cost of self-disapproval, debt, or humiliating embarrassment.

"How weak and blind I was, Mary," he said, as he drew his arm around his wife. "The vases would have brought into our present home the demon of disquiet."

"I am glad you returned them," was her gently-spoken answer. "We do not need such things for happiness, Charles. There are higher, better, and surer sources, and we may go to them daily if we will. Contentment is great gain. Peace comes from right thoughts going down into right actions, not from a restless desire to possess whatever strikes the eye as beautiful or desirable. Let us be thankful for the good we have, and not suffer it to be thrown into shadow by the good of another. We lose all that we really have, and gain nothing by this. God knows best in what sphere of life we can be most useful to ourselves and to others; safest for this world and the next; happiest for

time and for eternity. Let us steadily, tranquilly, patiently move and shine in our sphere, and all will be well."

"The vases shall be my monitor. I will think of them when tempted again," replied Talbot, "and the recollection will quicken into life my better reason. The lesson was needed, and I have learned it by heart."

IX.

IN TROUBLE.

"THERE's something wrong with Hugh," said Mrs. Ellis, speaking to her husband. "All the life has gone out of him."

"He's tired himself at play, or eaten too much cake and candy," answered the father. "He'll be all right again in the morning."

But Mrs. Ellis did not feel so sure of that. She had noticed, on Hugh's return from school, a change in the frank, cheerful face he commonly wore. He did not come with his usual hop, skip, and jump, and merry laugh, but glided in almost stealthily, as though he wished to avoid observation.

Instead of romping with Lion, the house dog, or racing over the lawn and through the garden walks, he sat down by a window and opened one of his lesson-books. But though he bent down over his book, his mother, who, unknown to

Hugh, was watching him closely, saw that he was not studying.

"What's the matter, my son?" she asked.

The boy started, and his face grew red.

"Nothing," he replied, in a voice that did not sound like his own, turning his head away as he spoke.

"Don't you feel well?"

"My head aches." And the lad answered truthfully.

Mrs. Ellis laid her hand on his forehead. It felt hot.

"How long has your head ached?" she inquired.

"Not long."

"Do you feel badly anywhere else?"

"No, ma'am," Hugh answered. But in this he was not so truthful. He had something worse than any head-ache. What was that? you ask. I will tell you. He had the heart-ache; and heart-aches are a great deal worse than head-aches, and more difficult to cure.

Mrs. Ellis stood with her cool hand resting on Hugh's forehead for a little while, hesitating

whether to question him farther, or to wait until he showed more willingness to confide to her the trouble that weighed on his mind.

"I'm sorry," she said, as she removed her hand. "You've been playing too hard."

Hugh did not reply, and his mother left him without saying anything more.

He was dull at supper time, and soon after the lamps were lighted went off to bed. After undressing himself he knelt down as usual to say his prayers. But as the first words of "Our Father" came from his mouth a great darkness and confusion fell on his mind, and a shiver ran through his body. He could not repeat a single sentence of the prayer. Almost in affright, he arose quickly and crept into bed, drawing the clothes tightly around him.

It was a long time before Hugh could get to sleep, and then his slumber was not peaceful. Dreams troubled him all through the night. From one of these dreams he awoke, trembling in every limb, and with the large drops of perspiration standing on his forehead.

This was the dream. He thought that, against

his father's express command, he had gone off with two or three lads of his own age to visit some Indians who had set up their bark tents in the neighborhood, where they made baskets, and pretended to tell fortunes. He dreamed that as he stood looking in at one of the tent doors a tall, painted Indian, with a wicked face, caught hold of his arm with a tight grip, and said, —

“What a fine boy! I buy him.”

Then a man, whom he had not seen before, stood up beside the Indian, and answered, —

“I'll sell him.”

“What your price?” asked the Indian, his grip on Hugh's arm growing tighter.

“Twenty dollars,” said the man.

“I take him,” answered the Indian; and as he spoke he commenced fastening the boy's hands with a strip of tough bark. Hugh tried to scream, but could utter no sound.

Then he awoke, panting and frightened. For almost an hour he lay awake after this. At last, wearied with tumbling and tossing on his bed, he fell off to sleep again; and then another frightful dream came with its strange and shadowy

terrors. He thought himself still awake and alone in his room with the darkness around him. Suddenly the door opened, and a man entered with a lamp in his hand, the light from which filled all the chamber. He had a severe countenance; and his eyes, as they turned on the scared boy, seemed to pierce him through like sharp daggers.

"Come," he said, in a stern voice; and Hugh arose and followed him out of the room. He did not find himself in a softly carpeted hall, but in a narrow passage, the floor and walls of hewn stone. A cold damp air sent a shiver through his body. The man strode on through this passage, and the boy, trembling and in great fear, walked swiftly after him. At last the man stopped before a grated iron door, put a key in the lock, and swung it open. Hugh went in, and then the door shut upon him with a heavy clang, and he was alone in a prison cell. It was dark at first; then it grew light, and he could see the damp, slimy walls, the grated window, and the iron bedstead.

Ugh! What a shudder ran suddenly through

him! - As his gaze rested on the bed, a pair of glittering eyes fixed him where he stood, as if they were arrows. Slowly uncoiled the body of a huge serpent; the head raised itself in air, moved from side to side, and then advanced towards him, the fiery eyes growing larger as it approached.

Motionless with terror, the boy stood gazing at the serpent until he could feel its hot breath in his face. Then fear grew into such wild agony that he awoke.

O, what a relief it was to see daylight coming in through the window, and to know that all these frightful things were but dreams!

Never before had such terrors visited him in sleep. Glad to leave his bed, Hugh arose much earlier than usual, and dressing himself, went down stairs, and out into the garden. The sun was just rising, and his beams, as they fell on the leaves and blades of grass, made thousands of dew-drops glow and sparkle with a brilliancy richer than that of the purest diamond. The air was cool and refreshing, and all things peaceful. But the peace of nature did not reflect itself in

the boy's heart. Upon that rested a heavy load, and within was a trouble that all nature, no matter how tranquil or beautiful, could not soothe.

It was because of this that his dreams had been so frightful. The hardest pillow on which any one can sleep is a troubled conscience. It gives no rest day nor night.

And so Hugh's conscience was troubled? Yes; he had done a wicked thing. You are sorry to hear this, and I am sorry to tell of it. Poor boy! none knew of his sin except God, from whose eyes nothing is ever concealed; and he, in his great love, troubled his conscience, and let evil spirits haunt him with dreaming fears, so that he might be led to repentance.

Shall I tell you of his sin? At school, on the day before, he had seen in the desk of one of the children a large ripe pear and a peach. "O, I wish they were mine!" he said to himself, eagerly. To desire the possession of anything that belongs to another is to covet that thing. If Hugh had remembered the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," etc., when this desire to

have his schoolfellow's peaches came into his mind, and had, because covetousness was sin, turned his thoughts instantly away, the evil that followed could not have happened.

But he cherished the desire, and kept thinking of the fruit, and longing to taste its delicious sweetness. At recess it happened that he alone remained in the school-room. He looked from the window, and saw that all the children were out of sight. They had gone around to the other side of the school-house. Then he thought of the pear and peach, and opened the desk in which he had seen them; not with any intention to steal. O, no! He would have been frightened at the thought. But he would just like to look at them. There they were, so beautiful and tempting. He took first the pear and then the peach, smelled them, turned them over and over, smelled them again, and at last pressed his teeth so hard on the pear that the skin gave way a little, and the luscious juice was tasted.

You see how he put himself in the way of temptation. If he had resisted the first covetous desire, and turned from it as a sin, he would

have gone right out of the circle of danger. But he did not do this; and so covetousness led him into theft; for, no sooner did he taste the fruit, than, with the blind eagerness of one who gives himself up to an evil passion, he thrust both the peach and pear into his pockets, and then slunk away where no one could observe him, to devour them with the greediness of a hungry animal. This was not enjoyment. He did not really get the fine flavor of the fruit, which was taken in great mouthfuls and swallowed before it was half chewed, lest some one should discover and expose him.

He actually panted from the exertion of eating, so rapidly had it been done. Now there fell upon him a dreadful anxiety, accompanied by a sense of shame and guilt. He was afraid to meet his schoolmates on the play-ground, lest they should read in his face the story of what he had done.

When the loss of the fruit was discovered there was much excitement and inquiry, and the thief was denounced in very strong language. Every word of scorn, contempt, and execration

that fell from the boys' lips struck like a heavy blow on Hugh's heart. But no one accused him, or appeared to have the least suspicion that he was the guilty one.

This was the heavy load that Hugh's heart and conscience brought home from school; and we do not wonder that the old cheerful life was gone, nor that the evil spirits he had taken into his company tormented him even while asleep.

O, how wretched the boy was, out in the garden, with all things pure and beautiful around him! The very peace and loveliness of nature he felt as a rebuke. In his misery he left the sweet garden walks, and shrank into a corner of the tool-house, where he sat down. A bird lit on the branch of a tree above him, and sent out a clear, exultant song. He looked up, and past the bird, through an opening in the leaves, he saw a small circle of clear blue sky. A strange feeling came over him. It seemed as if God was looking down upon him from heaven. First there was awe, then reverence, and then a sorrow for the evil he had done, that made the hot tears rain down over his face. Clasp- ing his

hands together, and lifting his eyes, he said, "O Lord, I have been a very wicked little boy, but I am so sorry! I am in great trouble, and don't know what to do."

Just then he heard the sound of feet approaching. He paused in his prayer, sitting quite still. But the sound went by. He did not continue praying, for it came just then into his mind that he would try to make restitution — that is, restore to his schoolmate what he had taken from him. But the pear and peach were no more — he had eaten them. Yes, but he might get another peach and pear, and secretly put them in the boy's desk. How was he to get them? He had no money.

Here a tempting spirit — they are always near us, trying to take us off our guard — actually suggested to Hugh to shake some pennies from his brother's money-box. I am pleased to say for him that he shuddered at the thought, and rejected it. What did he do next? Just what he should have done the night before. He went to his best friend on earth, his mother, and told her all.

I will not describe her pain and sorrow. But she was a wise and loving mother, and kept her arm tightly drawn around her boy while he told his sad story. His feet had stepped aside into the paths of sin, and she knew that love would most surely turn them back again into the right way.

"If I only had the money to buy another pear and peach," said Hugh, sobbing, "I'd make it up to him."

"You would confess all, and give him the fruit."

An expression of doubt and pain came into the boy's face.

"I don't see any good that is to come from confessing it to him," he replied. "God knows it, and he knows too that I am very sorry, and want to do right about it. You know it, and I know it. I'm sure that's enough. If all the school knew about it I couldn't hold my head up among the boys. I might never in all my life do a dishonest thing again; and yet somebody would always be afraid of me, and say that I was a thief."

Hugh's mother understood all this as well as he did, and couldn't see that any good, but rather harm, would come of any further open confession he might make. So, when he started for school that day, she gave him a folded piece of paper, containing some money, and with these words written on the inside :—

“To buy two peaches and two pears, from the boy who, in a moment of temptation, wickedly took your peach and pear. He is very sorry, and has confesed to God and his mother.”

This paper Hugh placed in his schoolmate's desk at recess on that very day. The boy, on finding it, was so affected by the manner in which restitution had been made that he went up to the teacher and handed him the paper; and the teacher read it aloud to the whole school.

A deep silence followed. The scholars looked at one another with inquiring faces. Hugh felt as though every one must know him to be the thief of yesterday: but no one suspected him. After a pause, the teacher said, in a voice that trembled with feeling, —

“My dear boys, I am affected by this incident. Who the lad is that was tempted yesterday, and so truly repents to-day, we do not know. His secret is with God, his mother, and himself, and therefore safe. It is better for him, and for us also, that we should not know him. But this I will say of him, that such repentance as his — the repentance made before God, and thus quickly bearing the fruit of restitution — is so deep as to be the pledge of future integrity. If I knew him I would trust him without fear. Take the lesson of his painful experience to heart, and if, in a moment of temptation, you do evil to another, confess it to God, and as quickly as possible repair the wrong you have done.”

Hugh went home from school with a lighter heart than on the day before; and the dreams that came to him in the night that followed were peaceful and happy.

X.

IN THE LAST TIME.

"AN opportunity like this doesn't come to a man every day. 'Go in and win!' that is my advice."

The speaker was past middle age; and he who listened had made the record of about an equal number of years in his book of life.

"The stock will double on its present quotation in less than sixty days, Mr. Cushing," pursued the speaker, with ardor. "I've given you a hint of what is doing, and a hint only; but, take my word for it, the stock will go up like a balloon. It's down to twenty now, but it will range between the thirties and forties in a month."

"And go down faster than it went up, Mr. Slocum," was answered.

Mr. Slocum shrugged his shoulders, and looked arch and knowing.

"Of course you'll be out of danger. Forewarned, forearmed. It's a 'fancy,' I know. But there's a game up, and I happen to have seen the winning cards. Take ten thousand dollars of this stock now, and in thirty days you may sell out at fifteen or twenty thousand. The thing's as sure as death. There's not a particle of risk. The stock's been at twenty for the last year, and can't get below that figure. You can sell at twenty-five or thirty, while it's on the rising numbers, if you don't care to wait longer for higher chances."

"If I understand you," said Mr. Cushing, "there is no solid basis for the anticipated rise."

"None at all; but that's no concern of yours or mine. We don't operate for a rise, but only take advantage of what we know is going to be."

"After sixty days the stock will fall?"

"Yes; and then 'stand from under' is the word; you'll not find me the owner of a share."

"Somebody will lose."

"Of course."

"And be swindled, of course," said Mr. Cushing.

"You may call it by what name you please. But that isn't the question now. 'Go in and win' is the word."

"This winning, I think you said just now, was as sure as death?"

"Death sure, Mr. Cushing!"

"The remark has set me to thinking, Mr. Slocum."

"Ah! what of your thoughts?"

"There is a last time coming for us all."

"So the preachers say." Mr. Slocum shrugged his shoulders in a manner peculiar to himself.

"When some of the 'fancies' will rule at very low figures, I apprehend. For one, I should not like to hold them largely. I am afraid their value would be light among the treasures we are commanded to lay up in heaven."

"You're too serious, Mr. Cushing. I don't see what this going in on a rising market has to do with treasures in heaven. We're not talking about dying, but living. The stock will move

up in spite of anything you or I can do, and, for the life of me, I can't see where the harm is in taking advantage of a rise."

"All that I would gain, somebody else must lose," said Mr. Cushing.

"Of course."

Mr. Cushing shook his head. "It won't suit me, friend Slocum. I should be certain to hear of some duped and unfortunate loser on the very stock I sold as a fair article, when I knew it to be valueless above a certain rate. If I were to buy at twenty, I am afraid my conscience would never permit me to sell at thirty or forty, when I knew the purchaser would be swindled out of half his money."

"You're too squeamish, Mr. Cushing! I call myself an honest man, and a Christian man also, and for the life of me I can't see any harm in taking advantage of a rising stock, 'fancy' or no 'fancy.'"

"Excuse me, Mr. Slocum," said the other, "but your remark about being a Christian man leads me to say that I'm afraid Christianity hangs very lightly on the conscience of a stock speculator."

"Did you never speculate in stocks, Mr. Cushing?" The interrogator frowned a little. He felt the remark as rather personal.

"Yes."

"What about the Christianity of your conscience, ha?"

"It hung too lightly, sir — too lightly. I've gone in a few times on the rising market, and won. But for every dollar gained, I made a loss in another direction."

"Ah! That was unfortunate."

"So I felt it to be."

"You had one consolation, Mr. Cushing."

"What?"

"The stock speculations saved you."

"How so?"

"Of course the misfortunes you speak of had no connection with them; so what you lost by one hand you made up with the other."

"On the contrary, Mr. Slocum, they were intimately connected, and the losses were in consequence of the speculations."

"That's a little remarkable."

"But no less true, sir."

“What was the nature of these losses?”

“There are two kinds of riches, Mr. Slocum — earthly riches and heavenly riches. Gold and good. I gained gold, but lost good. In securing earthly treasure, I laid up just so much less of treasure in heaven.”

“I can’t understand why, Mr. Cushing. You didn’t cheat anybody. Speculation is neither robbing nor stealing. The article is in market, and you buy at current quotations. When a rise takes place, you sell. It may happen, and often does, that the price falls, and then you lose. You have adverse as well as favorable chances. The thing is all open to the day.”

“Gambling, sir, mere gambling,” answered Mr. Cushing. “A strife to gain what others may lose, not a system of reciprocal benefits, which is the Christian law of social life. It is founded in an intense and eager selfishness, that will not wait for the slow returns of useful work. It helps nobody, and generally hurts everybody whom it may happen to reach. Money, where it does not come as a gift or benefaction, should always represent a useful equivalent. It is a

sign of value. But when I would possess my neighbor's money without a fair return, then am I not covetous? Do I not desire his goods? Am I not violating a divine commandment? The agriculturist, the manufacturer, the merchant, the artisan, and all who are engaged in productive work or useful employments, serve the common good, and become sharers, by virtue of this service, in the commonwealth; but the speculator, like a tumor in the body, draws in the rich blood, and gives back nothing but fever, unhealthy excitement, disturbance of the useful functions, and pain. That tumor, sir, is no part of the true body of society, and it will be extirpated in the last time. It may grow, as other evil things grow here, but its life is opposite to heavenly life, and it will not be found in heaven."

"You are too serious altogether," Mr. Slocum made answer. "This is an extreme and abstract view — more ethical than practical."

"Than practical! Why, my dear sir, the evil consequences of what I am condemning all right-thinking men see and deplore. The causes

lie, as I have intimated, in an intense and eager selfishness, that grasps for gold as the robber grasps for plunder. Neither the speculator nor the robber cares for others; he does not gain by work, production, or benefit of any kind, and take his money as the reward of things useful, but by the law of force or artifice. Is it not so? Think!"

Mr. Slocum was silent.

"There is a last time for us all, my friend," said Mr. Cushing, speaking even more seriously than before; "a last time that is sure to come. You and I have stepped across the line of middle age. I will be fifty in a month, and you have already accomplished the half century. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty years at most, and we shall be missed from our places among men. Have you made your will?"

The question, coming so unexpectedly, gave Mr. Slocum a start.

"Yes; of course," he answered. "I am too systematic to neglect a thing of so much importance. Life is uncertain."

"And in making it," said Mr. Cushing, "you

considered well the nature and value of your property, and disposed of it with justice and judgment. As no part of your earthly possessions could be taken into the other life, you provided for their equitable distribution."

"I did."

"As a wise and prudent man. And then, Mr. Slocum, did not your thought go beyond, to that state of existence which succeeds? to that real world, where we are to abide forever? Did you not think of the 'riches divine,' which are spoken of in God's Holy Word, as possessed by the righteous there? of the treasure which our Lord enjoins upon us to lay up in heaven? In leaving everything of the world behind us at death, our future becomes a thing of momentous consideration. The wealth of this world is represented by gold and silver; that of the spiritual world, into which we rise at death, by goodness and truth. If we do not possess spiritual riches at death, if we have no good in our hearts nor truth in our minds, we shall be poor, miserable, and wretched in the other world.

"These things have pressed themselves on my consideration of late, and your remark about the gain in this fancy stock speculation being sure as death, sent them trooping through my mind again. But I have occupied both you and myself too long. Good morning."

"So you decline this opportunity?" said Mr. Slocum, as his friend moved away.

"I turn from it, and with a shudder at the thought that I was for an instant tempted. No, sir; there is a last time coming, and it may not be afar off. I will not burden my conscience with any transaction that is against the law of heaven, into which I hope to rise when mortal shall put on immortality. Good morning."

And the two men parted—one to ponder more deeply on the principles of rectitude, and the laws of heavenly life by which man must be governed, if he would build his house upon a rock, the other to forget warning and suggestion in the selfish love of gain, that impelled him to the use of any means not in contravention of human law, by which gold was to be won.

"Have you heard from Mr. Cushing within a

day or two?" asked a business friend, addressing Mr. Slocum, two or three weeks subsequently.

"No. Why do you ask? Is he sick?"

"Very sick. The last I heard of him, the doctors had but small hope of his recovery."

"You shock me! Mr. Cushing! Can it be possible! What ails him?"

"Some disease of the heart, I understand."

"And not expected to recover?"

"No."

Mr. Slocum's countenance grew serious. His thought recurred to his last interview with Mr. Cushing, and he felt a slight chill running along his nerves. In drawing so near to his friend and acquaintance, death seemed to stand most unpleasantly near to himself.

All day the thoughts of Mr. Slocum kept turning to the sick man, and in the evening he called at his house to make inquiry as to his condition.

"Will you go up and see him?" asked the sad-faced wife of Mr. Cushing.

Mr. Slocum went up to the death-chamber;

for, to one of them, that last time had indeed come. A pale, placid face, and clear, calm eyes met him. The Angel of Dissolution had placed his signet there, and none could mistake the sign. Mr. Cushing smiled feebly, but sweetly, as he took the hand of his old business friend.

"I am pained to find you so ill," said Mr. Slocum, in a troubled voice.

The smile did not fade from the sick man's lips, as he answered, feebly, —

"The time has come sooner than I expected; but I am not afraid. I think there is some treasure laid up in heaven. If the amount is not large, it is in good securities, I trust; no 'fancies,' friend Slocum! No speculative stocks. Nothing but what is truly spiritual and substantial; that is, of love to God and the neighbor."

He shut his eyes, the smile still lingering about his mouth. But it began fading slowly, and when it died away, tranquil peace rested calmly where the light had been. He was at rest.

"No 'fancies' in the last time," said Mr. Slocum, communing with his thoughts as he

walked, in sober mood, homeward. "Will it be so in my hour of extremity? Will there be no worthless securities in the treasure I have sought to lay up in heaven, when I go, stripped of earthly possessions, into the eternal world? God help me, if my soul were required to-day! I thought him weak and foolish, when he would not go in and win, as I have. I am richer to-day, through the operation, by over five thousand dollars; somebody will be poorer in the same amount before sixty days; but I am glad Cushing held back. He could not have died so peaceably with that burden on his mind. 'Fancies' amid the securities sought to be laid up in heaven! I never thought of that before. I must look closer to my investments; for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

On the next day Mr. Slocum sold out all his speculative stocks, and has not since sought to gain a single dollar except through legitimate trade. He cannot forget Mr. Cushing, nor the inevitable last time that comes to all.

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